



BUCHANAN'S WIFE

JUSTUS
◊ MILES ◊
FORMAN





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"FARING TOOK THE CRUMPLED WHITE PAPER FROM THE
WOMAN'S SLACK HAND AND READ IT SWIFTLY"

BUCHANAN'S WIFE

A NOVEL

BY

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"THE ISLAND OF ENCHANTMENT"

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1906

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Published August, 1906.

TO
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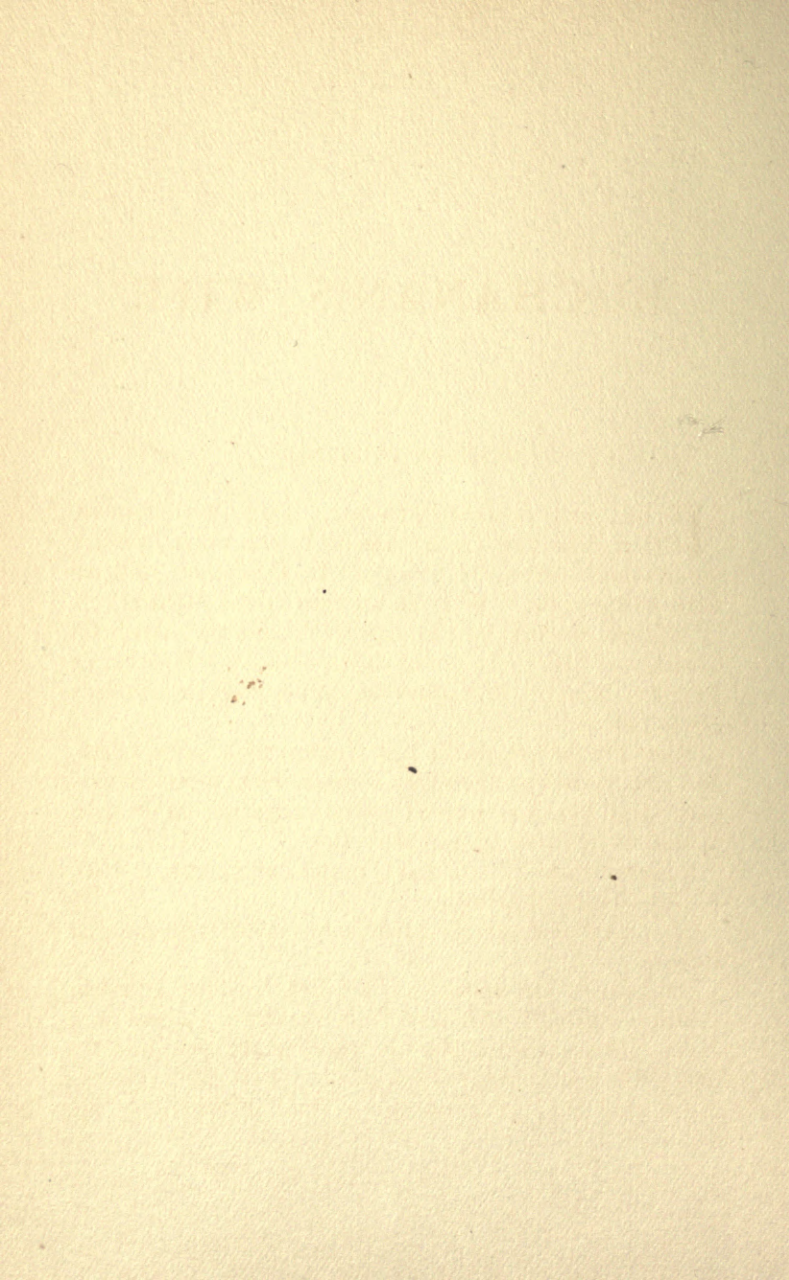
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BOOK I



BUCHANAN'S WIFE

I

HERBERT BUCHANAN

"IT has just occurred to me," said Miss Trevor, "that, like the young person in the poem, we are seven—only seven. I thought Mr. Buchanan said we were to be eight. Who and where is the eighth?"

"Harry Faring is the eighth," said old Arabella Crowley. "He is to come down to-day, I believe, in time for dinner. For some reason or other he couldn't come before."

Miss Trevor set down her teacup with some haste, and she stared at the elder woman with wide, excited eyes, and her lips pursed slowly together as if in a soundless whistle of amazement.

"Harry Faring!" she said, under her breath. "Oh, I say!—Harry Faring!"

M. Stambolof sat forward in his chair with sudden interest.

"Faring?" he asked, in his old, careful English. "Young Faring? Ah, now I am very glad to hear that he is coming down. We became friends some months ago. He is a young man of parts. Yes, I am exceedingly glad that he is to come here. I wish—" He

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stopped suddenly when he saw that neither of the women was listening to him, and for an instant his quick eyes dwelt upon that odd, significant gaze which held between them; then he looked down once more and began stirring his tea in silence. He was not a curious man.

"I say," said Miss Trevor again, still half under her breath, staring across at old Arabella Crowley, "is that quite—wise, you know—having Harry Faring here?"

"No, it isn't!" said old Arabella, crossly. "It is very far from wise, since you ask, but it is also no affair of ours, my dear. For Heaven's sake, let us remain out of it. We all have troubles of our own—at least, I have." She turned about towards Stambolof. "Have you ever met Mr. Faring?" she asked. "He is coming here to-day."

M. Stambolof repeated his unheeded remark.

"We became friends some months ago," he said. "I like him. He is a young man of parts—also of strength. Few young men are strong. I expect that is because they are too happy. Yes, I shall be exceedingly glad to see young Faring once more."

And just then Béatrix Buchanan came out through one of the long windows which gave upon the terrace.

"Ah, here you are!" she said; "having your tea in peace. You're very wise, you know. It's much nicer here than inside. Haven't we a magnificent outlook from our terrace, Stambolof? At this time of the day the sea yonder is almost always just like that—a silver line against the sky."

"Oh yes," said Arabella Crowley, in a grudging tone—"oh yes, it's very fine, I dare say, very fine indeed. Hardly up to Red Rose, of course, but very well in its way."

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Mrs. Buchanan laughed, for she was fond of the grim old woman. She called her "Aunt Arabella," as did almost every one who knew her well, and she began to argue in pretended indignation the relative beauties of the two places. But the Russian, Stambolof, who stood a little apart, leaning against the outer balustrade of the terrace, watched her silently, and his still, expressionless face softened for an instant with something which might have been pity. It seemed to him that the mantle of melancholy which hung always upon this young woman, and which had first attracted him to her, was just now much more apparent than usual—that the melancholy had, for the hour at least, turned to bitterness, and he was very sorry; for, though he counted his friends upon the fingers of one hand, he had taken a genuine liking to Béatrix Buchanan. It seemed to him rather unusually pitiful that a woman so obviously made for sunlight should be compelled to pass her life in the shadows. He was himself a man pierced and wrung by deathless grief, and he knew too well what sorrow was, to pass it lightly over when he saw it in another.

Mrs. Buchanan walked the length of the terrace and stood for a moment with her back turned, looking down over the great landward sweep of lawn and gardens where, between rows of pointed firs, the drive curved in from the public highroad far beyond. Stambolof's grave eyes were upon her still, and he frowned when he saw the moment's droop of her shoulders, and that her hands always twisted restlessly together and could not be still.

"Mr.—Faring—Harry Faring—is coming to us to-day," she said, turning back. "He should be here by this time, I think." She pulled out a tiny jewelled

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watch from her girdle and frowned down at it. "He was to come by the five-o'clock train. I don't see— He should be here now." She turned her head once more towards the fir-bordered drive, and the shadows beneath her eyes seemed to deepen and darken until there were dark circles there.

"I dare say the train is a bit late," said Arabella Crowley. "It often is. Besides, he has heaps of time before dinner — three hours." She laughed gently. "Dinner is the sole matter of any great importance," she said. "If you arrive anywhere in time for dinner, all is well. If you don't, you might better have stopped away. Wait until you're five and fifty, my dear, and you will wake up each morning thanking God for another day with dinner in it."

"That might well depend upon the dinner, I should think," submitted Stambolof. "I am appalled at the thought of what tragedy a life like yours might so easily contain."

"I never go anywhere," insisted Mrs. Crowley, "where I'm not sure about the dinners. I am too old to be foolhardy."

Béatrix Buchanan gave a little, absent smile—but those eyes of hers wandered ever towards the great slopes landward, and the fir-bordered drive.

"I suppose that might be twisted into a sort of compliment to my housekeeping," she said, "or at least to my cook. Thank you, Aunt Arabella!" She turned away with a quick sigh. "I expect I must go in to the others," said she. "They'll think I'm not civil." And, as she went towards the window, little Miss Trevor who had been sitting quite silent, sulking, as it were, over old Arabella's reproof of a few moments before, moved after her, slipping her hand into the elder woman's arm.

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"I'll go too," she said. "I expect they're talking scandal in there, and I want to hear it."

Then, when the two had disappeared, the other two people left on the terrace sat for a little time in silence looking after them. It was Arabella Crowley who at length spoke.

"Stambolof," she said, "you are a man of sorrows, and consequently you know a great deal. Tell me"—she waved a hand towards the open window—"can sorrow do all that?" The Russian's masklike face, scored and seamed and hollowed by grief, twisted into a wry smile.

"You are pleased to be cryptic, dear lady," said he. "Can sorrow do what?"

But old Arabella's methods were direct.

"Nonsense!" she said, rudely. "You know quite well what I mean. Don't beat about the bush, Stambolof. You know I hate it. If we two old people cannot speak frankly together, who can?—I mean Béatrix Buchanan and the amazing change that has come over her in these past two years—since her marriage, in fact. You see what she is now. Well, as girl, two years ago, she was something so amazingly different that I cannot express it at all."

"She can hardly have been more beautiful at that time," said the man. "She is to-day almost as beautiful as a woman can be."

"No, no!" said Mrs. Crowley. "She was not more beautiful. She was less so, I should think. She was just an ordinary, thoroughly commonplace girl of good birth and breeding and position. There were scores like her, and scores more interesting in every way, though I suppose they were less pleasing to the eye. She looked like that Rosetti thing: *The Blessed*

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Damozel, or whoever it is, leaning over the gold bar of heaven (why do they have gold bars in heaven?) and thinking about all sorts of romantic mysteries; whereas she never thought of any mystery beyond her clothes. Well, that is what she was—just a healthy young beauty and nothing more. Then they sold her to Buchanan—” The Russian frowned and made a little, inaudible exclamation. “And now—now she is what you see! Can sorrow do all that, Stambolof? Of course she is unhappy with Buchanan. Any one would be. He is a beast.”

The Russian nodded his head slowly, and that still face of his softened again for a moment, as it had done before.

“Sorrow and one other thing, dear lady,” said he.

Old Arabella drew a quick sigh.

“Yes,” she said. “Yes, I expect it’s that. I expect I knew it was that all the time, but I wanted you to say it. This Harry Faring who is to come here to-day, I am afraid she has been in love with him almost all the two years of her marriage. They had some sort of boy and girl affair long ago—nothing at all serious, I fancy, not with Béatrix, anyhow—but Harry had been away in Africa for a year or more when she married. Why he should have been asked here this week I cannot think. It seems to me most rash. I know they have seen almost nothing of each other since her marriage. Yes, it seems to me very rash. Béatrix is much too nervous to run risks, and she’s desperately unhappy, poor child! I’m fond of Harry Faring, but I wish he were not coming here just now. Where was I? Oh yes! I was just saying that Harry was away in Africa exploring something when Béatrix married.”

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"And then?" said the Russian, when Mrs. Crowley paused. "Then?"

"Why, then," said Arabella, "when she married and found what a brute Buchanan was, I expect she turned back upon her old affair with Faring and began to idealize that, and to paint it up in pretty mother-of-pearl rainbow colors. That would be like a woman."

Old Arabella shook her wise, white head.

"It's a bit of a shock, Stambolof," she said, "this plunging into marriage. It's a bit of a shock to a young girl, especially when the plunge must be made with a man for whom the girl has never felt the slightest spur of passion. She has been—unless she's one of these ultra-modern, neurotic young creatures who know about everything long before they experience it—she's been a child, practically, an ignorant child. Then all at once she's made a woman. Oh, it's no light thing! Think of her rage and resentment and despair when she finds out what it all means—this girl who has married a man she doesn't love—and finds out what it might mean if she had married the other man, the one she did care for! When I think of all that, I am amazed at the amount of patient, long-suffering virtue I see about me. It is wonderful."

"You put me in mind," said the Russian, "of a story I read a long time ago—a French story. I have forgotten who wrote it. It may have been a great man. I have no memory. The story was about a man who married a girl practically from the convent, but, oddly enough, he happened to have fallen in love with her before the marriage. More oddly still, he was very wise, and he realized the truth of what you have just been saying, and he made an experiment—I might explain that he was no longer very young.

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A young man could not have done the thing. On the wedding-night he handed his bride to the door of her chamber, and kissed her finger-tips. He did not even kiss her cheek. He pointed out to her that the door could be bolted from the inside, and bade her good-night. She seemed a bit surprised and more than a bit relieved. Then this man set in, day by day, to make his wife fall in love with him, and he had had long experience to teach him how. He brought her flowers each morning, he rode with her, he flirted with her. He made love to her—but not too much. And every night he kissed her fingers at the door of her chamber and bade her good-night. Eh, he was wise!"

"Well?" demanded Arabella Crowley, sitting up. "Well? Get on! How did it end?"

M. Stambolof emitted a little, gentle laugh.

"After about a fortnight of this," said he, "the bride knocked on her husband's door with a hair-brush one night and said she was afraid."

Herbert Buchanan came out from the house and stood for a moment regarding the two with that peculiar, nervous twitching of the eyebrows which was habitual with him and which gave him the appearance of being constantly annoyed.

"What are you two laughing about?" he demanded. "You seem to be having a very gay time here all by yourselves."

"Stambolof is telling me stories," explained old Arabella Crowley. "French stories, too. I shouldn't have believed him capable of them."

Buchanan made the brief, mirthless sound which passed with him for laughter.

"Stambolof," he said, "if you are becoming a chatterbox, I'm done with you. All is over between us.



"BUCHANAN CAME OUT FROM THE HOUSE AND STOOD FOR A
MOMENT REGARDING THE TWO"

HERBERT BUCHANAN

The reason Stambolof and I have become such cronies in so short a time," he said to Mrs. Crowley, "is that we have in common an illimitable capacity for silence. I don't have to talk to Stambolof, nor he to me. We sit opposite to each other in my study, and smoke and drink brandy for an entire evening without a word. And in the small hours we part on the best of terms. If he has become a gossip I shall cut my throat. Life will have no further joys for me. I don't take on new friends easily."

And that was very true. Buchanan did not make friends easily. It might fairly be said that he did not make them at all, for his few silent evenings with Stambolof counted for nothing. The men had little in common save the natural tendency of each to silence. There was no true understanding or sympathy between them. Buchanan went through life alone. He was not a brute or a beast. Arabella Crowley had wronged him there as did every one else. He was an unfortunate product of the atrocious mismating to which the human race is addicted. His father had been a Scots-Welsh scientist, a cold man, harsh and ascetic, who had married, as such are wont to do, a young Italian girl all smiles and softness and song and instability. The Italian died as genuinely crushed as if by the weight of a glacier, but before she died she had the misfortune to bring into the world a son. And this son grew up to manhood with two natures warring within him. Unhappily, the Scottish-Welsh was uppermost and outermost. None ever knew that there was a desperately shy sweetness inside the man. No one could have known. Indeed, by the time he married, it was all but dead. There may have been women who could, even then, have saved it, had they

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known—nursed and called and petted it into health—but Béatrix Buchanan was drinking bitterness and eating sorrow just then, so that the last of the Italian blood turned chill, and Buchanan became what he was, a silent misanthrope, a gloom-enfolded dreamer of dreams, a recluse the gates to whose heart and soul were closed and barred—“*No Trespassing*” writ large across them.

Still, as has been said, old Arabella wronged him. He was not a brute. He had come of a long line of gentlemen, and the ordinary instincts of his class were his laws. He never ill-treated his wife, save perhaps in marrying her, and there, it is probable, he had some desperate hope of snatching happiness in the face of his God; but he was often impatient with her, and sometimes more cruel than he realized. Without doubt he did his best, poor as that was. Fate had been against him from the first.

Even in externals he was oddly repellent. He was not quite an ugly man; given a different nature, he might have been rather handsome, but his natural gloom, and the almost wholly inactive life he led, had left him sallow and lean—lean almost to the point of emaciation; and, as has been said, he had a nervous habit of twitching his eyebrows constantly when he spoke, as if he were angry. He was of middle height, with dark eyes, which were too restless and shifting, and straight black hair. He had, shortly before this time, let his mustache and beard grow, the latter trimmed to a short point, and the effect was unpleasant—rather absurdly Mephistophelian.

Altogether, the impression which he made upon those about him was of a hard man, unsympathetic to the joys or sorrows of others, self-centred, gloomy,

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and melancholic, with that odd touch of malice which is found in cripples, or all who are deformed. And this was a fairly accurate portrait of the man. He was, in truth, all these things—and little else. What the world, in judging him, did not take into consideration, was the combination of forces which had made him what he was. The world seldom does that; but in this case it happens to be of some importance, because it throws at least a faint gleam of light on the thing Buchanan did during the night which followed Harry Faring's arrival at Buchanan Lodge.

II

FARING

FARING'S train was very late indeed — there had been an accident on the line, it appeared—so late that, by the time he arrived at the Lodge, every one was dressing for dinner, and there was only the butler to greet him and make his hostess's excuses.

He dressed at once, with that unusual quickness which is characteristic of all men who spend much of their lives in travel, and who have, perforce, to make hasty toilets, and, when he had finished, left his room, thinking that he would have time for a cigarette on the terrace before the other guests were down. But at the head of the stairs he halted suddenly, for some one was approaching along the dimly lighted upper hall, and, oddly, he knew by the very sound of her movement, before he raised his eyes, who the woman was.

Mrs. Buchanan saw him at the same moment, and stopped dead. She said, "Harry—Harry!" twice, in a strange little voice, and then came very slowly forward and gave him her hand.

"You're very—brown and—thin, Harry," she said, as one who does not heed what she is saying. And Faring said, stupidly:

"Yes!—Yes! isn't it?" Inwardly he was filled with a hot anger at himself for that his hand, which held hers, shook and jumped and could not be steadied. And

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he was full of a dismayed amazement, too, that her presence should so rob him of his self-control—so set him to throbbing and tingling. He had thought himself very strong.

Then, for a moment, neither of them, it appeared, could think of anything more to say. Only Faring's fingers unclosed stiffly and the woman's hand dropped to her side. At last he said, looking her in the eyes there in that half-light:

"Why did you ask me here, Betty? You—shouldn't have. It would have been better for—both of us if you hadn't."

"I know, Harry, I know," she said, in a whisper, touching his arm. "Oh, I know. Harry— Well, it wasn't my fault. Herbert insisted."

"Buchanan!" cried the man. "Buchanan wanted me to come here? Impossible!"

"You don't know him, Harry," she said, with a little, weary head-shake. "He's—he is cruel—malicious. He wanted to watch us here together. Oh, he's more malicious than you could understand! It amuses him to torture things—to torture me, for choice."

Faring turned his head away that he might not see her face.

"He'd best not—go too far," said he, under his breath. "He'd best not do that. I've been living a good deal among people who—aren't very civilized, Betty. I expect it has made a part—savage of me. I don't think I could—quite bear seeing you ill-treated. Don't let him go too far."

And then again, for a little space, neither of the two spoke.

"Shall we go on—down?" Mrs. Buchanan said, finally. "We're earlier than the others. They won't

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be down for a quarter of an hour, I should think." Faring turned, without speaking, and they went down into the empty drawing-room, where a footman was making lights, and crossed the room and stepped out through an open window upon the terrace.

It was not yet dark. The dusk was but beginning to gather, and, out over the leaden sea to the west, streaks of pale light, rose and gold and green and lavender, still remained above the horizon. It was a warm evening, with a soft, fitful breeze, with summer odors, with cheeping of birds and insects. There was a savor of smoke in the air above the clean, keen savor of the sea.

Mrs. Buchanan stood by the balustrade of the terrace, lax, her hands hanging at her sides, her face turned to that thin, pale wash of colors in the western sky, but the man watched her face and saw how the joy of life had gone out of it—saw the darkness beneath her eyes, and the droop of her mouth that had never drooped in other days. And, because he had loved her so long, an agony gripped him, watching, and a fierce, burning rage at the man who had made her what she was.

"Oh, Betty! Betty!" he cried, and some of that agony and burning rage must have been in his tone, for the woman turned with a quick breath that was like a sob.

"Don't!" she said, sharply. "Harry, don't! You—mustn't make it any—harder for me. Listen, Harry, you must help me all you can in these next few days. I shall need it. I need it now, for I'm not very well, and I'm nervous and overwrought, and it's going to be very difficult to talk and laugh with these people who are here, and to pretend that nothing is wrong. It's

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a terrible thing that you and I should be here together with that—with my husband watching us and grinning and chuckling to himself over my distress, but it's got to be gone through with. Oh, I was a fool to let you come—to send for you—Harry, can't you see? I—*wanted* so to see you, and, when he demanded that I ask you, when he— No, please, don't say anything! Only this—help me all you can. We mustn't have any more talks like this. We mustn't tell the truth again. We must lie, Harry, lie and grin and make jokes, and never let any one know—that—our—hearts are—breaking. Help me, Harry!”

She was very near to sobbing then. Faring strained his hands together behind him, and shut his teeth. He loved her very dearly, and this sort of thing was not easy to bear. He turned away and walked to the other end of the long terrace, and Béatrix Buchanan, in spite of the nervous spasm which was shaking her—wellnigh overpowering her—watched him go, watched with a sort of fierce pride the set of his head—thrust forward, in a way he had when under stress, with the strong cords of his neck straining at his collar—watched the brown hands, so fast clinched behind his back that the fingers had gone white. And when at last he turned and came towards her, she saw his face and she drew a quick, little sigh of relief, as one who, after strain and danger, sees safety and rest approaching. For she knew that he was very strong and sure and unwavering, and that she could lean upon him to the uttermost.

Indeed, he looked like a man upon whom a woman might lean. Strength was the first impression one gained upon meeting him—quiet, indomitable, unpretentious strength. Possibly this was in part because

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he was an unusually silent young man. Strong men are never talkative. More probably it was the odd squareness of head and face, which seemed made up entirely of straight lines—straight brows, straight high nose, close-shutting mouth, square-cleft chin; that and the level, unwinking gaze of his eyes which looked out, deep set under their brows, very calmly upon the world, quite without expression. They told nothing—like Stambolof's eyes. Indeed, but for the Russian's grizzled mustache and "mouche," which hid his mouth, the two men would have been strangely alike, for they had the same type. Young Faring must have been, at this time, about one and thirty, but he looked older, for his face was exceedingly tanned and burned and weather-beaten, so that it was darker in tone than his fair hair. Here again he was like Stambolof, for wind and weather had wrought upon him, in less measure, of course, what tragedy had wrought upon the elder man. The two might almost have passed for brothers.

"You haven't told me," he said to Béatrix Buchanan, "whom you have here this week. Whom am I to meet? Any strangers?" He spoke in the ordinary conversational tone of half-intimate friendship, and that is a good evidence of his power of self-control, for he had probably never before in all his life been so deeply moved or under so severe a strain as during the past few minutes.

Mrs. Buchanan looked up at him for one swift instant.

"Oh, you're good, Harry! You're good!" she said, in a whisper. Then:

"I think you know them all—or don't you know the Eversleys? Colonel Eversley is the great swell on

FARING

cavalry equipment—whatever that is—and he has been here for two months studying the American system, for some book he's doing. Lady Sybil is with him. She's a dear, rather. I used to know her in London before she married and before—I did. She was the Duke of Sundon's youngest daughter, you know—the late Duke's. Then there is Aunt Arabella Crowley—Bless her!—and Stambolof. You like him, don't you, Harry? Do you know you're rather alike, you two? Then there's Ellen Trevor— Oh, I beg her pardon! I mean Alianor Trevor. And that's all. Did you ever hear of so ill-assorted a party? It's the Eversleys' party, really. I wanted them here and asked them, and they begged me not to have a lot of people. They said they wanted to sit in the sun for a week and rest, because they both were fagged out. So I got together only quiet people who wouldn't want to dash about and do things. You, Harry, were a—late inspiration of Herbert's. Ah, but we're not to talk about that, are we? Ah, no!"

She caught herself up with a laugh that was half a sob.

"You see, little Ellen Trevor is pretty and childish, and she'll amuse Colonel Eversley when he wants amusement—and *you*, Harry, and *you*! And, besides, she is glad to be here on Stambolof's account. She has conceived a sort of frightened, worshipful passion for Stambolof. Such kitten-like girls often do for men of the tragic type, don't they? Of course, Stambolof doesn't know. If he did, he'd go away at once."

"I hear voices inside," said Faring. "I expect we must go in, mustn't we?"

"Oh yes," she said. "Yes, of course. I'd almost

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forgotten. Come, Harry, we'll go in to them." She touched his arm for an instant as they turned.

"Do you suppose God is fond of practical jokes, Harry?" she asked. "How He must laugh, sometimes, mustn't He, at the hideously comic things people do with their lives! Come in to the others."

III

THE FIRST CARD

A DINNER, that is to say a proper dinner, regarded in its aspect as a social function and not as a mere occasion for the consumption of food, has certain qualities in common with a theatrical or an operatic performance. There are times when, even under the most unfavorable auspices, a certain spirit, a sympathy, a *rapprochement* falls upon the occasion and at once lifts it into the realm of perfection—when nothing can go wrong, when the poorest and meanest of integrals, in some happy fashion, combine to form a flowing and concordant whole. On the other hand, there are times when it would appear that devils of discord are abroad, when the elements of gold combine to form dinning brass, and no efforts, however herculean, seem able to bring harmony out of chaos. Every hostess knows this, as does every musical conductor and stage manager, and none sits down to her perfectly appointed table without a desperate inward prayer that the gods of key and attunement will stand round and about her and save the day.

This first dinner at Buchanan Lodge was an unfortunate example of the latter class. It began with inharmonious elements, and the elements remained at discord through the meal. In the first place, Béatrix Buchanan's feeling of relief—almost of rest—over her

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pact with Faring had been at best but a momentary matter. She was no sooner seated at the table, opposite her husband's mocking gaze, than the peace went from her with a sudden rush, giving way to a lamentable nervousness. She had been under strain too long.

Buchanan himself was ever the worst of dinner companions. Through a natural disinclination and long disuse, he had almost entirely lost any command of small talk which he may once have possessed, and in consequence Lady Sybil, who sat at his right, and Arabella Crowley, at his left, had a bad time of it.

Stambolof was by nature too silent to be of much use in such a crisis, and as a result the talk was almost entirely confined to Eversley and Harry Faring, who had found ground of common interest in certain African explorations, through the Uganda country. Faring, it appeared, had taken part in two of the earlier essays, and Colonel Eversley was, as usual, athirst for information.

Arabella Crowley, stanch old soul, did her best in the way of engaging Lady Sybil across their silent host; and little Miss Trevor, from time to time, chattered feebly when she could find a listener. But in all it was a dismal feast, and as it went forward it became more and more dismal, for there began to occur those fatal moments of complete silence, after one of which at least three people invariably start to speak at the same moment, and then fall again into a dreary stillness.

Then a thing happened which all at once changed the lagging gloom of the dinner-table into something quite different and very much worse. Colonel Eversley, suddenly becoming aware that he and Faring had maintained an uninterrupted dialogue for half an

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hour or more, broke off with an embarrassed, laughing apology, and turned to his hostess, at whose right he sat. Devils moved him to rally her upon her altered appearance.

"I thought, when we came, you know," he said, "that you weren't at all fit. I said so to Sybil. I said, 'Mrs. Buchanan ought not to be havin' house-parties, she ought to be in bed.' And Sybil thought so, too. But, by Jove! it only wants a dinner and people around you and all. What! I never saw such a difference in a few hours. I've got a sister like that, though. Never looks herself till evening. Then she begins to sit up and enjoy herself, you know."

It will be reasonably evident that Eversley was not a tactful man. He meant well, but he was more at his ease with men. His remark was to the point, however, even if better unmade. Mrs. Buchanan's extreme nervousness and depression, and the strong effort she was making to hide these, had sent an unnatural flood of color to her cheeks and a sort of restless fire to her dark eyes. The effect was extremely beautiful, but only the type of human being represented by Colonel Eversley could by any chance have mistaken it for well-being.

She turned a swift, half-frightened glance towards Harry Faring's inscrutable face and thence to the brooding eyes of her husband across the table. Buchanan leaned forward with an odd little smile. One hand was playing at the stem of his wineglass.

"All phenomena may be traced to a cause," said he, looking down at the glass which he fingered. "My—Mrs. Buchanan's high spirits this evening are easily traceable. She is harking back to love's young dream. You wouldn't know, of course, but in the days of long

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ago her heart and Mr. Faring's beat as one. Until tonight they have scarcely seen each other since that happy time. Hence these smiles and blushes."

Now, this speech, if rendered in a sufficiently humorous fashion—if burlesqued, in fact—might pass, though in questionable taste, as fairly unobjectionable, but Buchanan spoke it with a certain mocking deliberation, and the thing bore close to the verge of an atrocious insult. Indeed, to every one at the table who knew the man—in other words, to every one but the Eversleys—the intent must have seemed quite beyond question.

What reason he could have had for making the speech it is impossible to imagine. What madness was burning in the man to drive him to so wanton a length one cannot think. It must have been a sudden up-flaring of that malice which had been so slowly growing in him. It is not impossible that his nerves, as well as Béatrix Buchanan's, were racked and quivering this night.

For an interminable-seeming moment there was dead silence. Then Colonel Eversley gave a short, amazed laugh, fixing his glass in his eye, and staring up the table at his host to see how the thing was to be taken. "I say!" he exclaimed. "I say, you know!" and turned to look across at young Faring.

Béatrix Buchanan had gone perfectly white, but after a moment the color came flooding back to her cheeks once more, and she faced about towards the Englishman with a ready smile.

"Now you know the story of my life," she said, lightly. "Please say that you think it is very pretty and romantic! Fancy! The two ancient sweethearts after many years — how many is it, Harry? Only

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two?—brought face to face once more in the presence—nay, at the very dinner-table of the cruel husband of one of them! I call that real drama, you know. The only weak point,” she complained, “is that neither Mr. Faring nor I seems able properly to play up to the part, do we? We ought to sigh and exchange it-might-have-been glances, and all that. We’re far too stolid, Harry.”

Colonel Eversley laughed again, a bit more easily this time, and said it *was* a rum thing—not that he hadn’t seen the same situation before, of course, many times over. Now, he had a cousin who— And Harry Faring at once began some laughing remark to Lady Sybil, and old Arabella Crowley plunged into the *mêlée* with a rapid fire of utter nonsense, so that, with every one talking very fast and no one listening at all, the worst of the situation was tided over, but through it all there remained, naked and undisguised, a sense of calamity, an atmosphere uncleared of storm, and the remainder of the dinner went with a feverish haste which would have been almost comic if it had not been something so much worse.

When at last the women had gone, Stambolof made a slight motion of the head to young Faring, and at once moved up into the vacant chair next his host, leaving the other two men at the far end of the table. He was, in his quiet, still fashion, thoroughly angry, for he believed that Buchanan’s speech had been meant for a deliberate insult to his wife, so framed that, if taxed with it, he could readily disclaim any seriousness; but Stambolof was wise. He had lived, in his five-and-forty years, through more experiences and vicissitudes than most men ever meet in their whole life’s span, and he had the wit to see that Buchanan

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was in no condition of nerves or temper to engage in general talk. In particular, he did not wish him to be thrown with young Faring.

He set in at once, therefore, upon a dissertation of unsurpassed dulness and interminable possibilities, and it did not in the least annoy him to see that Buchanan made no pretence whatever of paying heed, but sat in a sort of gloomy apathy staring at the table before him, and from time to time raising his little liqueur-glass of Chartreuse to sip from it.

They sat there for half an hour or more, until at last Stambolof had to suggest that they would be missed in the drawing-room; and in all that while Buchanan said "Yes, yes!" once, very abstractedly, and "Quite so," two or three times. When the Russian suggested that they rejoin the women, he rose at once, silent but amenable, and followed the other three men without a word. Stambolof said afterwards, to Arabella Crowley, that he seemed in a sort of daze—as if he neither saw nor heard any of the things about him. And, in the light of what occurred later that night, Stambolof spent many hours in wondering what was in the man's mind at this time. For that matter, though, no one was ever able to say what was in Buchanan's mind, either at this time or any other. He could not be judged by other men's standards, he dwelt so apart.

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room, it so happened that Lady Sybil and little Miss Trevor—Alianor Trevor, as she chose to subscribe herself since spelling out the name on Queen Eleanor's tomb in Westminster Abbey—found themselves together, and sat down in a corner of the big room to discuss the characters of certain common friends in London and in Washington. Béa-

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trix Buchanan had moved across to an open window, and stood a moment, raising her hot face to the caress of the soft night breeze. Arabella Crowley joined her there, and the two stepped out through the window upon the terrace, where the moonlight lay in silvery satin barred by velvet shadows.

The younger woman turned her face to the pallid moon, and it writhed and quivered and went gaunt, like the face of one who dwells in unbearable agony.

"You see, Aunt Arabella!" she cried, shaking. "You see! How is one to bear such things—such a life?"

"Oh yes, dear child," said Mrs. Crowley. "Oh yes, child, I see. I do not know what I should say to you," she said. "I expect it is partly because I am still very angry at—your husband. That was a shameful thing he did!—and partly because there is really nothing any one can say in such matters that will be of any avail. Oh, my dear, I am afraid we women were meant to suffer—for some inscrutable reason. I wonder what! So few of us are allowed to live happy lives. I am an old woman, child, and I have had both joy and suffering, but I think, looking back upon it now after so many years, I think there was far, far more suffering than joy. And I believe it has been so with all the women I have known. Women must weep, Betty, even if men don't work. I do not know why. I cannot think that it is quite just, but it is true." She took one of Mrs. Buchanan's hands between her own, which age was beginning to mark with wrinkles and distended veins.

"I'm not very comforting, am I?" she said. "Alas, I can find no great comfort to offer you. I can only say that you were very brave to-night. I loved you

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for that, as did we all, I think, who knew. Just go on being brave. It's the only thing."

But the younger woman turned upon her with a sort of fierce desperation.

"I cannot go on, Aunt Arabella!" she cried. "It has become intolerable. Ah, you can't fancy how intolerable it is! I'm in prison here, a prison where they're allowed to torture me. They don't do that in other prisons—only mine. In other prisons they shut you up and make you work—*let* you work. Here I must be idle, idle and watched—spied upon—insulted, as to-night at dinner." She wrung her hands, standing there tall and white and pitiful in the moonlight.

"I want my happiness, Aunt Arabella!" she wept. "They've taken my happiness from me, and my youth, and all I had that makes life bearable. What right have people—grown, experienced people who *know*—to sell a girl into such slavery! Oh yes, they did it! They sold me to Herbert Buchanan just as truly as girls are sold to Turks in Stamboul. And I was a child and I thought it didn't matter. I thought it meant just having more money than I'd ever had before, and plenty of nice people round me constantly, and the freedom that I wanted. And Harry—Faring was—away. I thought he'd forgotten, and so I consented." She faced old Arabella Crowley, blazing anger from her great eyes.

"How *dared* they let me do such a thing!" she cried. "They—my own people, who brought me into the world and said they loved me. They *knew*. I didn't. I was a child. And they knew I didn't, and still they grinned and smiled and said it was a splendid match, and that I'd be very happy—Happy!" She began to weep.

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"I want my happiness!" she said. "I was lied out of it, tricked out of it, and I have a right to happiness. I want it back."

"The waters do not flow up-hill, child," said old Arabella Crowley. "I am afraid there is nothing for it but just to go on being brave. I wish there were something that could be done, but—I don't know what. Only, my dear, Harry Faring mustn't stay here. You must send him away. I'll speak to him if you like. He mustn't stay. It is much worse for every one concerned."

Mrs. Buchanan dropped her hands and turned away with a little tired sigh. Her burst of passion, it would seem, was spent, and left but a great weariness behind it.

"Yes," she said, as if she did not greatly care. "Yes, I expect he mustn't stay. It is harder with Harry here. Oh, much harder! It's like—looking through the bars at— Oh, Aunt Arabella," she cried, and, quite suddenly, her voice began to shake again. "Aunt Arabella, I've loved him so! There's no use in trying to lie to you or to myself. It's that that's making my life here so hideous. Without that I suppose I could get on somehow in spite of everything else, but with it I can't. Something's got to happen. Brave? I'm *not* brave. There's no bravery in me, nothing but hatred and resentment and—and—love. What am I going to do?"

Old Arabella soothed and petted her as best she might in her half-scolding, half-tender fashion, for she saw that the woman was almost at the end of her strength, and that a little more of this sort of thing might entirely unfit her for rejoining her guests inside. So, little by little, she brought her back to calmness

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and self-possession, and by the time the two went in through the open window to the drawing-room one must have looked very closely to see that Mrs. Buchanan had been on the verge of an absolute nervous breakdown.

The men entered the room almost directly after them.

"And now," said old Arabella Crowley to herself, "look out for trouble!" And she crossed the room to Buchanan's side with Boris Stambolof's intent—to isolate the man—for she did not know how far he might take it into his head to go, once he had made a beginning by that atrocious speech at the table. She had never known Buchanan to break out in that fashion before—his ill-humors commonly taking the form of moody silence—and it put her off her reckoning. He might do anything, she said, nervously, to herself.

As a matter of fact, she need have had no fear. Buchanan, in leaving the dining-room, had, by some supreme effort, shaken off his depression and bitterness, and seemed rather anxious to make himself agreeable. He talked for a few moments very pleasantly to old Arabella, and then, with an apology, moved over towards where Lady Sybil sat in her corner. As he went he passed young Faring, and nodded, smiling. Then, as if at a sudden thought, he halted beside the other man and touched him on the shoulder with the sort of familiar gesture which one friend uses towards another, but which was not in the least like Buchanan.

"I hope I didn't bring too deep a blush to your cheek at dinner," he said. "It was a rather silly thing to say." A bit of red came up over his own face as he spoke. Doubtless the apology cost him something.

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Young Faring, because the man was his host, smiled as pleasantly as he could, and made some trivial remark with the intent of passing the thing off as easily as possible. Then, as Buchanan started to move away, he stopped him.

"Oh, there was something I meant to tell you," he said. "I really hadn't a chance earlier. I dare say it's of no consequence, anyhow. As I was arriving, an hour before dinner, I saw a man loafing about among the firs near the gate. He couldn't have been a gardener, because he had no tools or anything, and because he drew back and tried to hide himself among the shrubs as my trap turned into the drive. I was in a hired cart, you know—my train was very late. Then, when I got out of the trap up here, under the portecochère of the house, I chanced to look back, and the chap was still down there near the gate. It's nearly half a mile, but I could see him standing among the shrubbery. I dare say he thought he was hidden. I spoke to the butler about it, and he said he would send a gardener down, but I thought I'd best just mention it to you as well. Doubtless they chased the fellow away promptly."

"Oh, thanks very much!" said Buchanan. "Yes, I'm glad you spoke of it. I don't like vagabonds loafing about the place. We had an insignificant robbery only a month ago. Something was stolen from the stables. I dare say this fellow to-day was an ordinary tramp who was trying to screw up his courage to the point of coming to the house to beg. Did he look that sort?"

"Well—no. No, hardly," said young Faring. "Of course I hadn't a good look at him, but his clothes seemed better than a tramp's would be. No, I

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shouldn't think he was a tramp. To tell the truth, he looked more like a discharged groom or something. I remember that he had a long, whitish scar across one cheek. I saw it plainly from the trap. An old scar. But—" He halted suddenly as Buchanan made a little exclamation.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I'm doubly glad you spoke," said the older man. "This fellow with the scarred cheek I believe to be a thief or a crook of some sort. He came to me yesterday, as I was standing on the terrace yonder, and asked for work. I had nothing for him to do, for of course my butler and coachman and head-gardener hire their own men in the usual fashion, and I never interfere. But this chap was so entertaining in answering some questions that I took him into my study—I was feeling rather bored at the time—and talked to him there. Then I gave him a five-dollar bill and sent him away. It occurred to me afterwards that in taking such a man into the house I acted very foolishly. I dare say he took copious notes while he was there. Yes, I am very glad you spoke about seeing him. He's here again for no good, I'm sure. I must have the gardener keep a close watch." He paused, and gave a little retrospective laugh.

"The chap was most amusing," he said. "He had been everywhere and had seen a great many things. Also, I think, he had seen rather better times. His manners were excellent."

Buchanan nodded and passed on towards Lady Sybil, and young Faring crossed the room to where his hostess and Stambolof stood near one of the windows.

Colonel Eversley had manoeuvred little Alianor

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Trevor into a corner apart. He was fond of young girls of the childlike type; he said he liked to watch their little ways. And it was beyond question that Miss Trevor was very pretty, and that her extreme ingenuousness was entirely real. She had great store of the "little ways" which Eversley so liked to watch.

The two chanced to glance across the room, where Stambolof and Faring stood talking with their hostess, and Colonel Eversley nodded his head.

"There are two good men!" said he. "You'll go a long way before you find better. I should like to see more of that Faring. I never met him until to-night, but I have heard of him. He did some good work in Africa last year."

"How much they look alike, don't they?" said little Miss Trevor—"Stambolof and Harry Faring."

Eversley put up his glass.

"They do, by Jove, don't they!" he exclaimed. "I hadn't seen them together before. By Jove, they do! They have very much the same type, though, of course, they're quite different in every other way. This young Faring is essentially a man of action. He's a man I should pick to take command of a difficult situation. He's adequate, Faring is. That's just the word! He'd be adequate to anything that was given him. He's not brilliant, I should think, but he's sure and steady, and he never lets go when he has taken hold. Look at his eyes, and that jaw of his! Ay, he's a good man! I should like to work with him."

Little Miss Trevor stirred protestingly in her chair.

"Yes," she said—"yes, of course, but I should have thought— Isn't M. Stambolof all those things, too? Oh, surely, he must be!"

"Stambolof?" said he. "Oh, well—yes, I suppose

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so. But—well, you see Stambolof's out of the running, rather, isn't he? Stambolof's—a sort of walking tombstone. Stambolof's a man who gives you the impression of having lived his life and finished it long ago, and of just staying on because he—well, can't die. No. One doesn't think of Stambolof as doing anything nowadays. He's done it all. He's waiting to die."

The girl shivered.

"How horrible! How very horrible!" she said. "I'm sure it isn't so. I—don't like to think that of him."

"It's true, though," insisted Eversley. "If you could look inside Stambolof you'd not find any heart there or—or soul, or any of the common things. You'd find ashes, I expect. Oh yes, his life ended some seven or eight years ago. And he's not old, either. He's no older than I am—four or five and forty, I should think; but, you see, he's not like other people. He's like a man in a book—one of these *grande passion* people. You know about it all, I suppose?"

"No," said the girl, "I'm afraid I don't. I knew that M. Stambolof had had a very tragic life, and that something very terrible happened to him to make him so—unhappy, but I never knew just what it was."

"Well, I don't suppose there's any reason for not talking about it," said Eversley. "I thought everybody knew. Everybody in London and Paris does, because the affair was widely talked about at the time it happened. That will have been nearly eight years ago, I think. You see, there was a Frenchman, the Comte de Colonne—de Vitry-Colonne—who had an ex-

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tremely beautiful wife. I expect he loved her, no one could have helped it, but he was a blackguard and fiendishly jealous, and he used to ill-treat her shamefully. Well, it was a rather open secret that Boris Stambolof loved her too, and that she returned it—she was very unhappy, you understand—but it was just as openly known that she was a good woman and that there was nothing wrong.

“Then one night, at a dinner-party out at Colonne’s château near Fontainebleau, Colonne, who was in a nasty humor, and had been drinking a bit too much wine, probably, insulted his wife foully before all the guests. Stambolof got up and struck him in the face, and, half an hour later, in Colonne’s own hall, with two or three of the other men holding candles, they fought a most informal duel with swords, and Colonne was killed—run through the heart.”

Little Miss Trevor gave a little, shivering gasp of horror, and she stared across the room at the Russian, with his grief-scarred face and tragic eyes, who stood so quietly talking to his hostess. She remembered, just then, that she had never seen him laugh, that when he smiled his lips smiled only, his hollow eyes were sombre and still.

“But the Countess?” she asked, presently — “the Countess? What became of her?”

“Ah, Amélie?” said Colonel Eversley. “She went, I believe, to certain relatives in Paris, but the shock and all she had been suffering for a long time had broken her badly. She was never strong. She died within a month. Then Stambolof disappeared. He went away somewhere for two or three years, and when he came back he was—like that. Yes, he’s a living tombstone, Stambolof is—a sepulchre. There’s only

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ashes inside him, I expect. He's not the man to live anything like that down. There's too much Russian in him—too much natural melancholy. He's only half Russian, by the way. His mother was English."

"Could any man live such a thing down?" asked little Miss Trevor, after a silence.

"Eh, what?" said he. "Oh, dear me, yes. Oh, Lord, yes. Heaps of men. But they'd be tougher fibre than Stambolof. He has too much Russian in him. They're all dreamers, those chaps. There's something sad about them all."

Little Miss Trevor sat silent again for a long time. Her hands were twisting together in her lap and her eyes were lowered to them. At last she said:

"Thank you for — telling me that. I'm—glad to know. I think, do you know, that I'll be off up-stairs, if you don't mind. I've a sort of—headache, to-night. You don't mind?"

Colonel Eversley rose at once, and said it was the best thing she could do if she had a headache.

"Though, of course, I *do* mind!" he protested, gallantly. "'Fraid I've been boring you with all this tragedy."

"Oh no," she said, quickly, "no, really! I'm—so very glad you told me. I'm glad to know about it. How some men have—suffered, haven't they, Colonel Eversley? If only one could help them—make it up to them somehow. Of course, one can't, though?" She paused a moment, rather as if she hoped that he would say something more—answer, perhaps, the half-questioning tone in which she had said, "Of course they can't, though?" Then she nodded, and said, "Good-night," and went across the room to Béatrix Buchanan.

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The Eversleys very soon made their excuses and went up-stairs, too, Lady Sybil protesting that they had been kept so busy in Washington and New York for the past fortnight that she had forgotten what sleep was like. Indeed, she looked tired and really ill.

"And as for you, my dear lady," said Stambolof to his hostess, when the others had gone, "if I may presume to offer advice, I should say, do you go and take your sleep also. For the remainder of the week we shall probably keep you up to unseemly hours. Therefore, sleep while you may. You also are tired."

"She is coming this instant," said Arabella Crowley, "with me. She is tired, and so am I. We will leave you men to your own devices, meaning thereby, I take it, whiskey and tobacco. Stambolof, you are to drive me over to Red Rose to-morrow. The Tommy Carter-ets are there, and I want you to see them again. Good-night."

The three men, thus left alone, stood talking for a few moments—at least, Stambolof and young Faring talked, Buchanan seeming again to have dropped back into his brooding mood. Then, finally, the host said:

"I shall go to my study, I think, for a pipe before turning in. Would you care to come?" He spoke, as it were, to both, but he looked towards Stambolof, and there was a sort of shy, deprecating appeal in his tone which could not have failed to reach the man. But Stambolof shook his head.

"Thanks, not to-night, I think," said he. "Like the others, I need my sleep. I shall have a turn up and down the terrace yonder for a breath of air, and then go to my bed. Another time, if you will be so good." He laid a hand on Harry Faring's shoulder. "You will join me?" he said.

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"Yes, yes, certainly," said Faring. Buchanan turned away.

"As you like," he said, "as you like. Good-night to you both." He hesitated a moment, that half-ashamed appeal, almost wistfulness, in his bearing as it had been in his voice. Then he went out of the room, and as he went his shoulders seemed to droop as if he were tired.

There were many things in Stambolof's tragic life to remember and brood over, many things which could never be forgotten, and long after this time he confessed to Harry Faring that one of them was the wistfulness in Buchanan's bearing, the tired droop of the shoulders, the odd, lonely, friendless spirit which seemed to hang about him as he left the drawing-room that night to go alone to his study.

"If only I had gone with him!" the Russian would say. "Who knows?"

But the two left together went out upon the terrace, which was still silvered with moonlight, for the moon was full; and they lighted cigarettes and walked up and down the long stretch, breathing in the sweet, summer-night air.

"May I speak freely?" asked the Russian, after a little time. "We have not known each other very long, but there is—is it not so?—a certain sympathy between us which makes frank speech possible. You must go away from here. It will not do for you to stay."

"Oh yes," said young Faring, readily. "Yes, of course I must go. I shall have some telegrams to-morrow, and I shall say that one of them calls me back to New York upon urgent affairs. No, after what happened to-night at dinner I could not remain, of course. Is the man mad?"

"Very nearly, I think," said Stambolof. "He is of

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the stuff of which mania is made. Have you noticed his eyes and the construction of his skull? He is exceedingly alone and he is exceedingly melancholy by temperament—and it is the worst type of melancholy. Now I, I suppose, am melancholy too, but it is a very different sort. I could not go mad. Buchanan might, very easily. He is more nervous than you would believe, and irritable and malicious. That which he did to-night was sheer malice. I was very angry for a time, but afterwards, when I thought it over, I was less angry and more sorry. The man is scarcely responsible for what he does.”

“That makes it no easier for his wife,” said Faring.

“No, of course not, and it makes what he did no less of an insult. Still, in a way, I am sorry for him. He is very lonely.”

Faring looked away.

“It was very—jolly of you,” he said, awkwardly, “to take the man on, as you did, when the women had gone—sitting and talking to him, I mean. I’m afraid I—I should have strangled him, I expect. I was—grateful, you know. I’d—I’d like you to know it.”

Stambolof smiled a bit sadly in the moonlight.

“My friend,” he said, “the situation was, to a less degree—greatly less—so like another one, of which you have doubtless heard, that I could but hasten with all my power to avert what—what happened in the other case.”

“Yes, I—know,” said young Faring. “I know. I was thinking of that. Oh, for God’s sake, what’s to come of this? Béatrix can’t go on with it much longer. She’s just about at the end of her endurance. She wasn’t meant to endure things. She’s not that sort. She was meant to be happy.”

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The Russian looked across at the younger man quickly.

"You have a great deal of penetration," he said, "more than I should have suspected. That is very true. She is not the sort to bear unhappiness well. Some women bear it all their lives, others—more nervous, I expect—cannot do so. What is to come of it? I cannot answer you that. Those things are, I take it, on the knees of God. We can only stand by and watch. We cannot help much. God is singularly intolerant of help. I know, because I have tried to interfere in His affairs, and as the result I am not a man, I am grief walking upon the earth, a thing racked and wrung by tortures—which cannot die. Did something move, just then, on the lawn below? No, the shadow of a shrub that the wind bent, probably! I thought something moved towards the farther side of the house. I was wrong. The farther side of the house? There's where poor Buchanan's sitting alone, with gloom about him and bitterness eating at his heart— No, nothing's stirring below there. I was mistaken. Eh—poor Buchanan! Come, lad, let's to bed with us! It grows late."

IV

IN THE ROOM WHERE THE OLD GODS SAT

THE room which Buchanan called his "study" was an out-house, a square, fire-proof, brick structure detached from the house and connected with it only by a narrow passage with double doors made like the doors of a safe. The place had been built by the former owner of Buchanan Lodge, who was a famous Orientalist, to contain his extremely valuable library and his collection of Chinese and Japanese porcelain and jade and armor and carved woods—a collection which, at his death, went to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Inside, the structure was a single room, sixty feet square and a story and a half high, with a narrow balcony running round three sides of it, and small, clere-story windows to admit light, as well as the larger ones below, which had been heavily barred like the windows of a prison.

When Buchanan took the place he had these bars torn away, because he said they were a standing dare to thieves; and he fitted the huge room—one could not say filled it—with a very heterogeneous assortment of treasures which his father had bequeathed to him. From the gallery, whose balustrade was a series of Japanese temple rams of carved wood—dragons and elephants and all manner of grinning monsters—he hung Persian and Turkish rugs, and a set of very fine

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fifteenth-century Flemish tapestries. From the high ceiling he suspended Spanish altar-lamps and Chinese lanterns of pierced brass. Below, Venetian thrones and age-stained marble tables struggled with ceremonial priests' chairs out of a Japanese temple; and the effigy of a Florentine knight in armor glared across the shadows at a Samurai in his exquisite gold-wrought fighting-gear.

To a purist in artistic matters, the great room must have seemed a chamber of horrors, but, in spite of all, it undoubtedly had a certain uncouth and bizarre impressiveness, a sort of barbaric majesty. Entering it for the first time one did not laugh, one gasped. It was like entering the great treasure-hall of some barbaric conqueror, full of the spoil of temples and cities. It was a dim place, shadowy even by day, full of gloom-enfolded spaces by night—corners whence, as the eye slowly accustomed itself to the darkness, strange gods and demons and contorted symbolic beasts grinned and leered.

Gods of stone and brass, stained with the altar smoke of centuries; gods of dead creeds and forgotten ritual loom strangely solemn from their niches nowadays. Weapons that slew men when the world was young, helms that shed death from royal brows bear a certain austere sanctity even to the scoffer in this age of dynamite and democracy. Alien fingers touch them gingerly, for they moulded nations out of other nations, and the very borders of both are long since forgotten. There is something in an ancient thing which must command respect—quite beyond the fact that it fetches a good price in the auction-room.

Buchanan went through the little narrow passage which connected his museum with the house, and

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clanged the iron door behind him. It did not lock automatically, as it had been built to do, for the mechanism had long been out of order. He turned two or three of the keys on the switchboard near by, and from the hanging-lamps tiny beams of yellow light burst suddenly into flower against the gloom and fell athwart dull gold and steel and yellowed marble, in an effect sombre and grotesque and weirdly impressive. He turned another key, and the one big reading-lamp, which stood on its broad table—a Byzantine table of cracked marble inlaid with colored stones—glowed like a full, yellow moon among stars.

"At last!" said Buchanan, with a great sigh of relief, and he drew his shoulders together and shook them, as if he would physically shake off that which pressed upon him.

"Another day gone, thank God!" he said. "And *what* a day, what a day!" He spoke aloud, as men who live very much alone are apt to do.

"A few hours more of it," said he, "and I should have raved—gibbered." In truth, the evening had shaken him—that little scene at table, especially—and his nerves were in a bad way. Without his realizing it at all they had been, for a long time, going from bad to worse. Stambolof was right, there, his wise eyes had seen well. The solitary life he led, the lonely, brooding gloom, the lack of bodily exercise had told. He had been fancying himself very strong, as gloomy men nearly always do, and now, quite suddenly, in one uncontrollable burst of that bitter malice of his, he had found himself, on the contrary, very weak, and it frightened him. His sneering little speech at dinner had not been deliberate, it had blazed up out of a moment's jangle of nerves—a moment in which his

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control of himself had entirely, astonishingly given way. With a man of another, franker type, exactly the same inward condition would have resulted in a furious outburst of violence.

The thing had left him frightened and unstrung and much depressed. As he sat down beside the Byzantine table, there in his great chamber, and poured himself a measure of whiskey from the near-by decanter, he found his hands trembling, and scowled over them.

"A few hours more of it," he repeated, gulping the liquor thirstily, "and I should have gibbered. Why the devil did I make her ask the man here? Why didn't I let it alone? It was a mistake."

He said that over and over again.

"It was a mistake—a mistake!" And he frowned sullenly out across the shadows, clasping and unclasping the hands that lay upon his knees. "I shall have to be civil to him," he said, "and to all the rest of them. I shall have to grin and smirk and fawn and listen to their silly speeches by the hour and hour together. Oh, it's damnable! The whole rotten marionette show is damnable! Shall I never have done with it?" The fire within him flared suddenly up in a weak outburst, and he sprang to his feet and began to walk up and down the room among his gods and warriors and his carven oak.

"One thing's sure!" he said, angrily, "this ends the house-party giving. I'll have no more of it. I'll be quit of that, at least. I'll have some sort of peace in my own house—some sort of quiet. Who is there in that lot yonder that cares whether I'm in the room or out of it—cares whether I'm alive or dead? Why should I have them about me? I'm better rid of them."

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From that his mind went to Stambolof, and Stambolof's refusal to come and sit with him, and at the thought his face twisted into a wry grin of bitterness. The thing had hurt him oddly. It had seemed to him, in his abnormal sensitiveness, a rebuff that was almost an affront.

"Even Stambolof!" he cried, aloud, with his wry, twisted grin, and his voice trailed away into mutterings, only to rise again presently.

"To be rid of it all!" he cried, tramping the floor, "clear of the whole tangle, out of it for good and forever!" And at that his face jerked up suddenly, and he halted in mid-stride beside the marble table.

"*That!*" he said, in an odd, startled tone. "*That?*—I wonder." He went slowly across the room to a certain ancient cabinet of carved Venetian walnut, and he opened a door in this and took something into his hand and came as slowly back to the table, where the lamplight glowed. He dropped into the arm-chair where he had been sitting before, and laid a pistol—a revolver—on the table beside him. The light glittered evilly along its polished barrel and upon the foolish mother-of-pearl which encased its butt.

"*Why not?*" said Buchanan, holding, as it were, his paltry little life in the hollow of his hand and sombrely regarding it. "Why not? A moment's work and I'm out of my tangle—well out of it, and for good and ever. What have I to live for? What will to-morrow be?" His face twitched awry again in that sorry, bitter grin. "And the day after that—and next week, next year? My God, what of the years to come! I'm young yet. I may live forty years more—fifty!" His voice ran up into a sort of cry and broke, and his hand went out to the pistol, which lay there gleaming in the lamplight.

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But, as if the thing had been hot and had burned him, the hand jerked nervously back again and the man shivered. He was not brave, he was only morbid. He had very little courage either moral or physical. "I—don't want to die," said Buchanan, in a shaking whisper. "It's cowardly—cowardly!" he said, lying miserably to himself.

Thereafter, sunk in his great arm-chair, huddled, chin on breast, he fell into a sort of sullen silence, staring before him, and he sat for a long time saying nothing more. Only from time to time his eyebrows twitched or his lips moved noiselessly. It chanced that, as he turned, he faced one of the ancient gods who sat arow against the walls of the room—a Buddha, this, of gilded bronze, the dull gold gone in patches from the worn surface; Buddha seated upon a lotus-cup, head bent forward a little, faintly smiling, sphinx-like, enigmatic. The figure was not above a foot high, but it loomed mountainous and majestic from its shadows. It knew all things, both good and bad, and had discovered the great secret—that neither of them mattered in the least. It smiled serene and untroubled, neither amused nor scornful, over the making and the wreck of empires. It saw nations come and build and boast, and presently scatter again. It saw an infinite swarming of human things that flowed and ebbd about its feet. It saw the old faiths die and new ones spread abroad, but the smile neither widened nor disappeared, for the new faiths would presently die too. It looked out over the mountains and beyond the horizon's rim down the halls of eternity, where there must have been some great peace and reward, for Buddha smiled—serene, sphinxlike, enigmatic.

The man stirred uneasily in his chair.

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"Oh, you may grin!" he said, "you may well grin. You'll see it out—all the rotten show. You'll see us all out. You'll be grinning when we're dead and gone, and when the sea dries up and the mountains fall over. What's a life to you? *You* don't have to bother with it. You just grin and it passes by in two winks. *You* don't have to grind out every day and make the hours drag along, and curse every hour because you're a damned shackled slave. But *I* do! *I* do, and I tell you I can't bear it any longer. I want to be free, I want to be loose of these fetters. I want to go out and tramp the earth and breathe the air and be answerable to nobody. I tell you I can't bear this sort of thing any longer. My nerves are drawn to fiddle-strings, and they're snapping one by one. Oh, for God's sake, stop grinning there!" He snatched a book from the table and made as if to hurl it, but the strength went suddenly out of his arm, and the book dropped open to his knees and so slid to the floor, rumpling and creasing its leaves as it fell.

So again he dropped into a moody, frowning silence, and another long time passed. But at its end, sunk in abstraction though he was, dulled to outer impressions, something called him to himself. That unnamed sense which gives warning of danger, which makes felt the unseen, unheard presence of another being in the room, all at once waked him, brought him to attention, and a moment after he was conscious that a current of air was entering the place. He felt it, cool and fresh, against the back of his head.

It has been said that Buchanan was not a courageous man, and that was true, but it must be admitted that at this moment he acted with coolness and discretion. It so happened that under the great Byzantine table

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by which he sat was another electric switchboard, whose keys controlled a series of lights about the room. He had had the thing put there because he habitually sat in this one spot, and it amused him to be able, without moving from his seat, to make a light in any corner of the huge chamber that he wished. By lighting first one area and then another, he often got, thanks to the barbaric nature of his decorations, surprisingly picturesque effects. He would, for instance, throw a light upon one of the great hanging-squares of Chinese temple embroidery and, by darkening the rest of the room, obtain a really magnificent picture. All this is simply by way of explaining how the man happened to have a light-switchboard in a place so unusual as under a table.

Buchanan sat quite still for a long instant after he felt that intruding presence. He was thinking very fast and, a bit to his own surprise, very coolly. In particular, he was trying to discover the exact direction from which that current of air came. Then slowly, with more care than was really necessary, he put out his right arm under the shadow of the table. Neither his head nor his body had moved a hair's-breadth.

In an instant the great room was in absolute, black darkness, a darkness which stung the eyes like a sudden glare of light. In another instant Buchanan was out of his chair and crouching to the floor on the farther side of the marble table. The massive base of the thing was an absolute protection against any assault less than that of artillery.

Then, out of the gloom, a light shot down at the far side of the chamber, and the man standing there beside an open window dropped something which fell with a crash on the floor, and covered his eyes with his hands.



“ “ I HAVE YOU COVERED. COME HERE! ” ”

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As he did so he said, "God!" in a shaking voice which was almost a sob. It is reasonable to infer that this trick with the lights had, at least for the moment, unnerved him.

"Stand just where you are, please," said Buchanan, safe in his darkness. His voice, he found, was not quite steady, and he forced a little laugh into it to lend it countenance.

"I have you covered with my pistol," he explained. "No, don't pick yours up. You won't need it." He touched two or three more keys of the switchboard, and lights burst into flower about the room, and once more the reading-lamp on the table, behind which he stood, glowed like a moon among stars.

"You see that I tell the truth," he said. "I have you covered. Come here."

The man wavered for an instant. The open window was close behind, and a single leap would have made it. Then he came slowly across the room towards the pistol-barrel which faced him.

"A-ah!" said Buchanan, in a half whisper. "It's *you*!" Down one side of the man's face, from cheek-bone nearly to jaw, ran a scar, white across the color of the cheek, albeit that was, seemingly by nature, pallid rather than sanguine. Otherwise the man was a lean man, with a narrow face, smooth-shaven, and hard, blue eyes. There were two short, deep creases just beyond the corners of his mouth, and this mouth had a cruel look. He was dressed in decent serge, neither new nor so old as to be badly worn.

The hard, blue eyes did not blink nor shift from Buchanan's eyes, and they expressed neither fear nor any other emotion whatever. If, for a moment, while those lights were playing tricks, the man had been unnerved,

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he had certainly made a swift and entire recovery. The pistol in Buchanan's hand he seemed not to regard at all.

"It's *you*, is it?" said Buchanan again, and the man said, "Yes," and relapsed into silence. The tone, like the eyes, was without expression.

"I knew you were still about," Buchanan went on. "One of my—my guests saw you skulking among the trees down near the gate this afternoon, and told me. I meant to have the gardeners put on watch to-night, but I forgot it."

"Oh, they're on watch!" said the man. "Somebody set them at it. That is," he corrected, carefully, "they're more or less on watch."

"But not quite enough, it would seem?"

"No, not quite enough."

Buchanan gave a little, amused laugh.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, waving a hand towards the big arm-chair which he himself had been occupying earlier. "Sit down and we'll talk it over. I enjoyed your little call yesterday. I found you entertaining. I have no reason to think your powers have gone off since. To be sure, the hour is late, but I am not in the least sleepy, and I take it you're not, either, or you wouldn't be climbing in at my windows." He pulled up a chair for himself and sat down.

"Ah, now we shall be very comfortable, I think," said he across the marble table. "With all due apologies, I call your attention to the fact that this pistol is ready to my hand. I am sure you will not force me to use it." The man said, "No." He was a discouraging man to talk to. He seemed to have no conversation.

Buchanan pushed the decanter across the table and

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drew towards himself the half-emptied glass which he had prepared earlier in the evening. Then he filled a pipe from the tobacco-jar at his elbow.

"That is Scotch," he said, hospitably, as he lighted his pipe. "I am sorry to say that I have no rye whiskey. I detest it."

"Thank you," said the man in the arm-chair. "I never drink anything but water, and I am not thirsty." His hard, indifferent eyes met Buchanan's sceptical smile, and a little flush came across his face. It made the scar stand out with almost startling whiteness.

"That is quite true," he insisted. "I seldom tell lies." The other gave a brief nod.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I was scarcely civil." He turned a bit in his chair, making himself more comfortable, settling himself, as it were, and his face had altered marvellously from its former expression of gloom and bitterness. There was color under the cheek-bones—where color so seldom showed—and a light in his eyes. He gave a little laugh, which bespoke interest and a hint of excitement.

"I am truly glad that you came in," he said, puffing at his pipe. "I was dull—damnably dull. There are no words for how dull I was. Do you, in your—in the exercise of your profession, ever feel dull? Do you chance to know what it is like to feel that, unless an absolute change takes place in your life—a complete *bouleversement*—you will cut your throat or blow your brains out from sheer weariness of spirit, sheer intolerable abrasion of the nerves?"

The man in the arm-chair, finger-tips fixed gravely together, appeared to ponder this.

"No," he said at last. "No, I cannot say that I

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have ever felt that. You see, the—circumstances are so different,” he explained.

“Quite so,” agreed Buchanan, with a generous wave. “Quite so. Still—”

“There is,” pursued the man in the arm-chair, “a certain variety of experience in my existence which, I take it, yours does not possess. And variety lends spice enough to my life to make it quite endurable.” He had spoken throughout with an odd correctness of diction, a sort of conscious care, as if he were recalling, for present use, a mode of speech perhaps not alien to him but long disused. The effect was curiously dry and pedantic.

“You see,” he said, slowly, picking his words, “this world is a very interesting place—if you look about you. You can’t never—ever—tell what may turn up just around the next turn of the road. It may be good or it may be bad, but that does not matter. It will be different, and that’s what a man wants.”

“Yes!” cried Buchanan, leaning eagerly over the table. His eyes were very bright. “Yes, by Jove! You’ve got it! You’ve got it! That’s what a man wants. ‘What you’re after is to turn ’em all.’”

“‘Turn ’em all’?” said the other man.

“It was a certain poem I was thinking of,” Buchanan apologized. “The ‘Sestina of the Tramp Royal.’ Somewhere in it the Tramp Royal says:

“‘It’s like a book, I think, this bloomin’ world,
Which you can read and care for just so long,
But presently you feel that you will die
Unless you get the page you’re readin’ done,
An’ turn another—likely not so good;
But what you’re after is to turn ’em all.’”

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The man in the arm-chair had turned his hard eyes upon Buchanan's face, but they were narrowed a bit and frowning, as if he strove to remember something. He nodded.

"Yes," he said, abstractedly, "that's me. That's how it is." He passed a hand across his brow, still with the air of memory searching thought.

"'Speakin' in general,'" he said, slowly—

"'Speakin' in general, I 'ave tried 'em all—
The 'appy roads that takes you o'er the world.
Speakin' in general, I 'ave found 'em good,
For much as cannot use one bed too long,
But must get 'ence, the same as I 'ave done,
An' go observin' matters till they die.'"

Buchanan gave a sudden, amazed laugh.

"Where the devil did you get that?" he cried. "Why, that—that's the beginning of the 'Sestina'! That's Kipling's 'Sestina'!" But the man in the arm-chair shook his head a bit wearily.

"I don't know," he said. "I expect I must 'a'—must have read it somewhere—or somebody told it to me. I forget. Anyhow, that's how it is." And Buchanan nodded, sinking back again in his chair. The old bitterness began to come over him.

"Yes, that's how it is. That's how you lucky ones can live. As for me—" He touched the silly nickelled and pearl-garnished pistol which lay beside him.

"About an hour before you came in," he said, "I got this thing out of its case with some vague notion of making an end to a life which has become intolerable to me. I dare say I shouldn't have managed it. I dare say I'm too much of a coward. Of one thing I'm certain"—his voice rose bitterly—"I have not the

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courage to go back there to-morrow morning—back to my—to my friends and live out this damned masquerade to its finish. I'm too much of a coward for that, if you like. I'm smothered here!" he cried; "I'm a prisoner in chains! I want to 'try 'em all—the 'appy roads that take you o'er the world!' I want to 'get 'ence' and 'go observin' matters,' but I can't. My responsibilities won't let me, and my wife won't let me, and my friends—if I have a friend—won't let me. I can't do that because I'm what I am, and I can't end it all because I'm what I am—a coward. Too cowardly to live, too cowardly to die. What remedy can you offer for that case, my house-breaking friend?"

The man in the arm-chair allowed himself a moment of grim humor, though the masklike face remained devoid of expression.

"Look away long enough for me to get that revolver," said he. "I'll see that you don't have no more—any more—troubles. I had intended to do that, anyhow. I knew you were in here, and I was going to do for you so that I could take my time working."

Buchanan drew back with a little shivering intake of the breath.

"By the Lord, you're a—cold-blooded fish!" he said, in a half whisper. Then he leaned forward again with sudden interest.

"Tell me," said he, "have you ever killed a man?—in cold blood, I mean, just because you wanted to get him out of the way? Have you?"

"What if I have?" said the man in the arm-chair.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" said Buchanan. "Of course, I'm not your judge."

"No," said the other, indifferently. "No, you're not." And then, as Buchanan dropped back into his

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listless silence, gloomy still, the hard, blue eyes watched him intently. They did not brighten or show excitement, or show anything else, they only watched, steady and unwinking. Once the man's hand began to steal out across the table towards that which lay glittering in the lamplight, but there were glasses and books and the decanter and other objects in the way. Also the table was broad, and so the hand withdrew once more.

"I want to lie on the earth," said Buchanan, after a long time. It is probable that he did not know he spoke aloud. "I want to be wet with the dew and soaked with the rain, and dried again with the sun. I want to wake with the sun in my eyes. I want to go unwashed and uncombed. I want to be free—*free!* I want not to feel that next week or next month I've got to stop it all and come back to jail, back to the marionette show. That's what I want. And I can't—I can't!" he said, after another silence. He beat his hands feebly upon the arms of the chair. "I can't!" he whimpered.

"Why?" said the man across the table, calmly.

Buchanan sat up with a jerk and frowned at him.

"The world's out there," pursued the man in the arm-chair. "The 'appy roads is out there, and the sun and the rain. They're free to everybody." Buchanan waved a hand. The gesture seemed to include the magnificence about him and the house behind, with its sleeping inmates.

"And this?" said he.

"Chuck it!" said the man in the arm-chair, stifling a yawn.

Buchanan stared at him.

"Chuck it!" said the man again.

"My God!" said Buchanan, in a faint whisper. He

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stared at the lean, still figure and the cold eyes across from him for a long time. Then he turned and began to walk up and down. Something subconscious in him, something which was on watch, warned him before he had moved away, and he took the pistol in his hand as he went. The figure across the table, which had, all at once, drawn itself up tense and rigid, relaxed again with a little sigh, and the blue eyes fastened themselves upon those calm, imperturbable eyes of Buddha, seated in his shadows, and became fixed there as if in a trance.

Buchanan tramped the floor. At times he muttered under his breath, but the words were unintelligible, wellnigh inarticulate. At times his free hand — the hand which did not hold the pistol — waved or beat the air or clinched fiercely in some hard-wrung gesture. Once he halted near the lighted table and made as if to speak, but, after a moment, moved away again to his interminable tramp up and down, up and down. At last, after, it may be, ten minutes of this, he came to a halt beside the other man. His face was white and drawn, and his eyes burned strangely. He must have been under very great strain.

"But how?" he demanded, weakly. "How? I—I know nothing of such a life. I should be helpless as a child. It's all very well to dream about and long for, but practically I simply should not be able to get on."

"There," said the man in the arm-chair, "is where *I* come in." And again Buchanan stared at him in dull incomprehension.

"A-ah!" he said at last, and for another turn or two took up his march.

"Look here," he said, when he had returned. "Let us talk business for a moment. Believe me, I do not

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wish to insult you or to pry into your affairs, but I should like to ask you a few questions. You are, I take it, from your mode of entering this room to-night, a professional thief,"

"Yes," said the other man, without emotion. He looked up at his host with cold curiosity.

"You came here," Buchanan continued, "in the hope of being able to steal money, or valuables which you could convert into money. Therefore, money is a consideration to you."

"Money," said the other man, "is a necessity to me. You understate the case." Buchanan waved an impatient hand.

"I have in this room," he said, "safely locked in a safe—which I fear you would never have discovered, for it is well masked—something over a thousand dollars in money—ten, twenty, and fifty dollar bills. I offer you one thousand dollars to leave this house with me to-night and spend one month in my company tramping the roads, teaching me how to beg my bread, how to live in the open, and how to behave myself when I meet others of my profession."

The hard, still face before him for the first time gave signs of feeling. The feeling appeared to be unmitigated amazement.

"Are you—serious?" demanded the man in the arm-chair.

Buchanan's white face writhed suddenly, and something like a sob broke from him.

"My God, do I look as if I were joking?" he cried. "I tell you I can bear this life no longer. I shall find some miserable scrap of courage and blow my brains out if I do not get away from it all. Don't you understand? Don't you understand? You said you did.

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It was that which made me say what I have said. I thought you understood. I thought you felt what I feel."

"Oh yes," said the other, "I know how you feel, but—but what do you want to tramp for? What do you want to beg for? You could wait until to-morrow and then get together a great deal of money—how much money could you get together?—and you could slip away to the other side of the world and live like a prince under another name. For God's sake, what do you want to beg for?"

Buchanan turned angrily. "That's my affair," he said. "In time I may wish to do what you say. For the present I wish to live close down against the earth—unwashed, uncombed, as I have said. Put it that it is a mad whim, if you like. Put it anyhow you wish to. The point is, will you help me for one thousand dollars?"

The other man did not immediately answer. He had lowered his eyes once more, and they seemed to commune with Buddha, beyond in the shadows. His face was again a mask—expressionless.

"If you require other inducements," said Buchanan, "remember that I am condoning your entrance here as a thief. Some men would have shot you down at once, if they had been in my place. Remember that, if I pleased, I could ring an electric-bell now and servants would come and take you in charge, and to-morrow you would be in jail. I do not like," he explained, half apologetically, "to make use of threats, but I am rather—desperate, I am ready to use any methods which present themselves."

The man in the arm-chair nodded.

"I am not forgetting that you didn't shoot," he said. And, after a moment, he gave a little sigh.

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"When do we start?" he asked.

Buchanan's voice shook.

"Now!" said he—"now! What time is it? Two-fifteen! I must change into some other clothes. I have them yonder in that large wardrobe thing."

He crossed the room quickly to the wardrobe—a great thing made of panels from a dismantled Venetian palace—and he laid the pistol on a chair near him and proceeded to change from his evening clothes into some worn tweeds, with heavy, serviceable boots.

"This is my world, as you might say," he explained, across the space. "This room is my world. I seldom leave it, and so I keep a few clothes here. It is lucky I do."

He rolled the discarded dress clothes into a sort of packet, and, after a moment's search, brought out a small game-bag which hung in the wardrobe. Into this he put the garments and slung the strap over one shoulder.

"I have a fancy," he said, laughing, "to disappear, as it were, into thin air, leaving nothing telltale behind me. So I shall carry these clothes away and hide them somewhere—lose them."

Next he went to a very beautiful Japanese cabinet, with doors of gilded and painted wood tracery, and opened it and pulled aside a curtain, and the door of a safe appeared. He opened this, in turn, and took from it a small parcel which was bound with yellow bands. The parcel he put into the pocket of his coat.

"Now we're ready," said he, and came forward once more to the table where the lamp stood and where his visitor sat in the arm-chair. The man rose.

"How about money for yourself?" he asked. "You can't go quite penniless. At least, it would be foolish."

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"Oh," said Buchanan, "I have five or six hundred dollars here in my pocket besides your thousand." It is possible that this was just what the other man had wished to know, for the lids drooped over his hard, blue eyes for the fraction of a second.

"And afterwards?" he pursued. "What if you should want a large sum—to do as I said, to travel, or something like that? How are you going to get it?"

"Ah!" said Buchanan. "That is worth thinking of." Then, after a moment, he nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "I know how to manage. I shall be able to get all the money I want. I have a way. Off with us now! Good God, must we wait here forever? I'm sick to be gone. Everything here is hideous to me. Off with us!"

The other man regarded him with narrowed eyes.

"You're not going to leave any word?" he said, in an odd tone. "You're going like this, without letting them know what has become of you? You said you had a wife. Aren't you going to—"

"No, I'm not!" broke in Buchanan, fiercely. "That's my affair; I'll go as I choose. Let 'em think I'm dead if they like—or anything else." The blood rushed to his head in a sudden spasm of hatred and bitterness.

"Let 'em think what they like and do what they like!" he cried. "I'm done with them." His face twisted into its grin of malice.

"For once," he said, sneering, "I shall be of interest to my friends. For the first time. What are you smiling about?"

"I was just remembering," said the other man, "what you said, not long since, about my being a cold-blooded fish. I was just thinking of that. That's all." He turned and led the way across to the open window.

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Near it, he stooped for the pistol that he had dropped there, but Buchanan cried out sharply behind him, and he shrugged his shoulders and went on empty-handed.

The two dropped silently out of the window to the turf below, and stood there, listening. There was no sound save the wind and, presently, the whistle of a train very far away. The night had turned cooler, almost chill, and a strong wind bore in from the sea, driving a rack of clouds overhead, so that the moonlight—the moon was low in the west by this time—came through only intermittently, in sudden floods of silver.

"There's no one about," said Buchanan, in a whisper. "The gardeners will have gone to bed long since." But as he spoke there came from the darkness beyond them a sound of pattering feet. They wheeled to face the sound, and then Buchanan broke into a nervous, gasping laugh.

"It's only a dog," he explained. "One of the dogs has been left at large."

The beast came to Buchanan's feet, peering and sniffing, and then, with a little whine of recognition, began to jump about him and to lick his hands. It was a great Borzoi, a beautiful animal of preternatural dignity, and for some obscure reason it loved its master. Probably it was the only creature in the world upon whose love Buchanan could count.

He spoke to it in a low tone, patting its head with his hand, and then sent it away. It went immediately, turning back a wistful head as if it realized that something was wrong.

Then the two men started down the long slope of the gardens, past the artificial pond, with its summer-house and pergola, and so gained the dark shelter of

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that double row of firs which hemmed the drive. Down by the gates, a full half-mile from the house, they halted and looked about them for means of exit. The gates were, of course, closed, and they were well-nigh impossible to climb, for they were made of vertical iron bars which broke into an ornamental scroll only at top and bottom.

"This tree will do," said Buchanan, finally. "Up with you!"

A cedar grew almost against the twelve-foot wall, and its lower branches were strong enough to bear a man's weight. The man with the blue eyes went up and over nimbly. Buchanan heard the soft thud of his feet as he dropped on the other side, and then himself made ready to mount. But first he turned and took one last look at Buchanan Lodge. The great pile lay upon its height of ground, black and squat and still against the torn sky. There was no sign of life about it save that, even as the man turned to look, a single light, a tiny pin-point of yellow, like a star, broke out in one of the windows, high up near the rear of the house. The servants were quartered there. In another instant it was gone, and the lodge was dark again — a blot of gloom against the streaked sky. Some vague pang of fear, of regret, of loneliness may have waked in the man at that last moment, for he drew a quick sigh, and his face, in the moonlight, was troubled. Then he turned and, as nimbly as his companion had done, mounted to the wall's top and dropped over upon the turf by the roadside.

They went along the road eastward, walking rapidly and in silence for something over a mile; then, beyond the last limits of the Buchanan estate, turned once more towards the sea, and for another mile traversed

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the wind-swept upland which is open and barren there. Fences and low stone-walls they had to climb, and thickets of low shrub growth they had to make their way through, but they went silently, without an unnecessary word.

They were bound for Brentford, where they were to take the west-bound local train at five in the morning, but on the way they were to stop at a certain abandoned and partly demolished farm hut under the brow of a wood, and near an old stone quarry, where the man with the blue eyes had been making his headquarters. There he was to pick up his scanty kit, and Buchanan was to shave off his beard and mustache.

For a long distance, as they traversed that desolate moor, they had to walk in single file along a very narrow foot-path, which was flanked by high-growing thistle and wild raspberry and such. Buchanan, in his eagerness, walked ahead. It was here that the other man spoke for the first time since they had started.

"When do I get my thousand dollars?" he asked. Buchanan laughed back over his shoulder.

"At the end of the month," he said. "You see, you can trust me, but I'm not altogether sure that I can trust you. You might leave me in the lurch. Yes, I think I'll hold the money for a bit."

To that the other man made no answer. He only plodded on behind his companion. But it may be taken for granted that he was thinking. Indeed, whenever the moonlight broke through that rack of driving cloud Buchanan might have seen, had he turned his head, that those hard, unwinking eyes were very steadily fixed upon his back just between the shoulders, and that the man's face was graver than common, grave

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enough to deserve the statement that at last it expressed something.

One may hazard a guess at his thoughts. One may at least risk the opinion that they dwelt upon that thousand dollars. Thousand? Nay, fifteen hundred—sixteen. Had not Buchanan said that he had five or six hundred for his own use? Sixteen hundred dollars! A sum, that! A sum to one who lives from hand to mouth and always in terror of the law. Sixteen hundred dollars! Sixteen hundred now ready to the hand, or—a thousand after a month's absurd tramping about. Which to choose?

The unwinking eyes never stirred from Buchanan's back, the feet plodded doggedly on in the other man's tracks, neither losing nor gaining ground, but one hand slipped into the jacket-pocket and withdrew a curious knife—a hunting-knife. The other hand slowly and silently opened the blade. It was a long blade—nearly six inches long. Then hand and knife settled back into the pocket together.

They were near the stone quarry by this time, and turned off away from the sea to skirt its precipitous edge. It was an old quarry, and long since abandoned. Turf had crept over the ancient cuttings, wherever turf could cling, and little gay flowers and gnarled shrubs had grown up out of the earth-filled crevices. Still, the weather-stained rock was for the most part clear, clean, and white under the flashes of moonlight, and, down in the depths, a hundred feet or more below ground, pools of water gleamed and winked.

"A good place for my dress clothes," said Buchanan, and, loosing the strap from his shoulder, threw the bag over the edge of the cliff. Some distance below it struck a ledge, for there was a rattle of loose stones,

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then a tiny, dull splash. The packet had found one of those mirroring pools and was safe from the eye of man.

"You wouldn't care to give me the money now—to-night?" said the man who walked behind, gently.

Again Buchanan laughed.

"No, I shouldn't," said he. "What a fool I'd be, eh?" Just then he stumbled and nearly fell, and said: "The devil! One of my boot-laces is untied. Wait a bit," and bent forward on one knee to tie it. He had shoved the pistol into a side pocket. Behind him, though he did not see, the other man had stepped a pace closer and both his hands were hidden.

It was just as Buchanan started to rise that the knife caught him under one shoulder-blade — an ill-driven stroke, because his back was turning at the time, but deep.

Buchanan coughed and fell forward on his hands and knees. After a moment, with a great struggle, he forced himself up again into a crouching posture—then to his feet. The other man stood away.

"I didn't—shoot you when—when I—could have," said Buchanan, swaying. He coughed again, a wet cough this time, and put his hands to his breast as if he suffered pain there. Then, all at once, his knees gave under him and all his body seemed to crumple into a limp mass, and he went down and lay very still.

The other man stood apart. He hid his face with his arms and sobbed with great, strangling sobs. So it seems that he was capable of emotion after all. He sobbed for some moments, with his face hidden, and once or twice he spoke, but the words were hardly audible, certainly not coherent.

Then, presently, he shook himself violently and took

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his arms from his face and looked before him; and he shrieked like a frightened animal, for the body of the man he had stabbed was not there.

It was the sound of pebbles and loose earth bounding down the precipice of the quarry that told him what had happened—that the overhanging shelf of ground had given way under the body and plunged with it into those far depths.

He threw himself down and crawled to the edge. There was no more danger now—firm rock was under him. He lay shaking and gasping, and stared down into blackness, waiting for a flash of moonlight. He thought he waited hours. When it came, whitening the sheer walls of rock, it lit those stagnant pools far below. It threw a ghostly, silvery sheen upon the shelves near where he lay, but the silent depths were wells of inky gloom. And they hid their prey—their prey and his.

The moon went under a cloud, and he waited again, prone, trembling, for he said to himself that perhaps the first flash was a faint one. Again he thought that he waited for hours. His eyes ached with straining in the dark. A second flash of moonlight came, longer this time, undeniably clear and bright. But those wells of blackness hid their prey. No moonlight could pierce their profundity.

They seemed to the man who lay there staring to mock at him, to defy him. Some cold, intangible horror, something damp and deadly and graveyardish seemed to reach up out of the gulf—seemed to press clammily against his drawn face—seemed to slip icy fingers about his working throat. His teeth began to chatter, and he thought that presently he screamed, but it was only a voiceless gasp.

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Then, after a bit, when he had lain for a time shivering, his face flat upon the turf, strength for a moment came to him and he made a mighty effort and struggled to his feet and ran—ran sobbing and cursing and weeping through the night. He was not habitually a nervous man, as may have appeared; he was almost as far from that as a man may be; but on this night fear had him by the heart—fear unspeakable, coming up like a deadly mist out of that black pit of horror, and he wept like a child, and cursed like a madman, and babbled like both together.

He ran as far as the sea-cliff, and dropped there, with his face to the rushing wind. It seemed to him in his panic that no power of earth or hell could drag him back to the pit where Buchanan lay crushed, with a knife wound in the back and sixteen hundred dollars in the pocket of his coat.

Sixteen hundred dollars!

In half an hour he was again hanging over the place—white-faced, shaking, wrestling with naked fear. Another hour, and he was still there, sobbing, cursing in the moonlight. Had any watched they must have thought the man a maniac.

But when at length dawn came, pallid and gray, bringing a mist of rain, it found no one on the brink of the old quarry. The place was empty and still. Had the man taken his courage between his teeth and descended?—on the far side of the excavation the way was easy—or had that grisly terror driven him, raving and empty-handed, away?

The dawn had no answer. There was no man to be seen. Those inky gulfs were black even by daylight, so they might still have been guarding their secret, holding their prey. But no one seemed at all curious

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about it, for no one ever came there to investigate. Men shunned the place because it looked unwholesome.

In the course of time, more rain fell into the pools, and more grass grew, and little gay flowers, but no one can bear witness that he ever saw a small, lean man, with a hard, scarred face and hard, blue eyes loitering in the neighborhood or acting as if the quarry interested him.

The man with the blue eyes seemed to have disappeared as effectually as did Herbert Buchanan, of Buchanan Lodge. But while Buchanan's case interested a whole country-side, and, through the press, a whole nation, it might reasonably be presumed that the other man's case interested very few people, if any.

However, presumptions are at best uncertain and fallible things. It is the unpresumed which works your comedy and your tragedy.

BOOK II

I

THE NEXT DAY

IN these days of a cheap, eager, and over-plenteous press the seeker after notoriety has fallen upon evil times. He will, to be sure, like the dog, have his day, but he will have no more. You may loot a bank or, Othello-like, smother your wife with a pillow, or you may hack her to bits and strew her about the streets, and the papers, morning and evening, will hail you with joy; but to-morrow you must give place to the gentleman who has blown up his sovereign with a bomb, or to the lady who has found a habit of throwing vitriol about over the too-prepossessing features of her friends. In an age when with our morning coffee we thrill over at least one sensation of the first class, six of the second, and a hundred of the paltry sort, no one sensation may hope to survive more than a few fleeting hours.

The Buchanan disappearance case was no exception to this rule. It had, of course, out of courtesy to the social prominence of those concerned, to be included among the sensational "stories" of the first class. Indeed, for at least three days after the meagre facts were put into the hands of the police and so transmitted to the press, the affair convulsed the breakfast-tables of a nation. But since only those meagre facts were to be had—garnished, of course, by the wildest

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and most magnificently imaginative theories—and since the efforts of the detectives, both professional and amateur, brought nothing more to light, the millions of breakfast-tables very naturally lost interest. Besides, at just that time a lady financier happened to come a most astonishing and sensational cropper, so poor Buchanan was forgotten, and the world knew him no more.

That is to say, the world at large forgot him. His own little world's memory was better—somewhat—the world which had known him, and had known his wife, and had shaken its head over their marriage—no happy one as he who ran might read. Then presently even these forgot—all but a few—forgot everything save that when they met Béatrix Buchanan they vaguely recalled there was something queer. Had she been divorced, or had there been a scandal? Oh yes, her husband had disappeared. A strange man, better out of the way.

The few finally left out of this process of elimination were those who loved the woman, a little, faithful body who stood by her during the first trying days and ever after, and strove their poor best to make the way easier to her feet, the night less dark to her straining eyes.

Buchanan's disappearance was so absolute, so baffling, so wholly without trace, and, above all, so wholly without apparent motive.

If angels who loved him—untenable theory—or devils who had a grudge to pay out—more like—had whisked him, body and bones, up out of his barbaric chamber that night into thin air, he could not more utterly have quitted the ken of man.

It seems that it was, quite naturally, his valet who

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first discovered his absence. This man, a faithful fellow who had been in Buchanan's service for some years, went to bed, after his custom, about one o'clock on that fateful night. Prior to doing so he made everything ready in his master's sleeping-room, and left lights there. He did not wait up, because Buchanan often sat very late in his strange museum, and wished no assistance when he at last came up-stairs.

It seems that about eight the next morning the man went to his master's room to prepare the bath and lay out clothes. Much to his surprise, he found the door ajar as he had left it, the lights still going, and the bed untouched. He said afterwards that at this time he felt no alarm, because he thought that the master had fallen asleep over his reading below, and had slept through the night in his chair. Alarm came when the man, descending and cautiously penetrating that forbidden chamber, found it empty—lights going there, too (both rooms were on that side of the house opposite to the long drive and the gates, and that is why the place had been quite dark to Buchanan as he stood by the wall at two in the morning and looked back for that last time). Then, the man said, fear quaked in him—unreasoning fear, for his master might well have been in some other part of the house. He said that that great, shadowy room, with its ancient gods and its contorted monsters and its gloomy corners, seemed suddenly full of a strange horror—something chill and deathly. He could not say why, but when he left the place he ran, and the back of his head felt cold.

Inside the house, in the hall, he came upon Mr. Powers. Mr. Powers was wending a ponderous way up to his mistress's sitting-room to submit the luncheon

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and dinner menus and take his orders for the day. To him the valet, shaking still and short of breath, told his tale.

"You're an ass!" said Mr. Powers, with scorn. "The mawster 'as slep' in 'is 'eathen hedifice yonder, an' 'as stepped hout into the garden for a breath of hair before 'e 'as 'is tub. You're a silly ass, my man." The valet heard these words of wisdom through in patience.

"In 'is hevenin' clothes—*an'* leavin' the lights ago-ing?" he inquired, when Mr. Powers had finished. The butler stared for an instant, and said, "My Gawd!" Then he laid his papers down on a near-by chair.

"Let's 'ave a look," said he. The valet began to shiver again.

"I'd rather not," he hesitated, but Mr. Powers so far unbent as to curse at him, and so, tiptoeing softly—they knew not why—the two traversed the little narrow passageway and entered Buchanan's "'eathen hedifice." The valet, in his frightened haste, had touched nothing. The electric lights were still on, burning dim and yellow against the faint daylight which slanted down from the clere-story windows.

Mr. Powers emitted a grunt, which may be taken by way of tribute to the eery atmosphere of the place—its shadowy weirdness. He crossed to the big table in the centre.

"'Ere's where 'e sat," said Mr. Powers, less haughty confidence in his tone, less in his bearing of that divinity which doth hedge a king. "'Ere's 'is glawss—'alf empty. An' 'ere's 'is pipe—'alf smoked out. So far, *so good!* Now what?" Mr. Powers's eagle eye roamed the shadows, but half-emptied glass and half-

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smoked pipe seemed to be all that was left of Herbert Buchanan.

"No hother remains?" demanded the butler. The other man winced.

"I don't like that word, sir," he said, uneasily. "It—it 'as hunpleasant associations. Beggin' your pardon, sir!"

"My man—" began Mr. Powers, ponderously, but stopped between two words and seemed to think better of it.

"Do these 'ere windows hopen?" he asked. He crossed the room and pushed at one of them. Oddly enough, it was the very window out of which Buchanan and the man with the blue eyes had dropped some six hours before. It was a French window, opening like a double door outward and fitted with a trumpery catch which fastened, again like a door, automatically. That gale of wind which had been raging during the night had blown the window shut, and the catch had snapped into place. Nature itself played into the fugitive's hand.

An under-gardener was passing near-by about his business, and Mr. Powers called to him.

"'As Mr. Buchanan been in the gardens this morning, my man?" he demanded. The man laughed.

"On a wet day like this 'ere, sir?" said he. "Gawd bless me, no, sir!—not as the master 'ardly ever *does* look at the gardens nowadays, though. 'E wouldn't know if there weren't no gardens."

"Send one of the grooms 'ere from the stables," said Mr. Powers, frowning, and presently the groom came running and touched his cap.

"Mr. Buchanan been in the stables this morning?" asked the butler.

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"No, sir," said the groom, and at something he saw in the other's face began to stare.

"*Beg pardon, sir!*" he said. "*Anythink wrong, sir?*"

"That will do, my man!" said Mr. Powers, and turned away from the window.

"Well?" demanded the valet, white-faced. Mr. Powers allowed himself an angry oath.

"Stop your ballyshivering!" he said. "The mawster's gone for a tramp, that's what. My Gawd, if a gentleman can't take a bit of a breather before 'is breakfast—"

"*Leavin' the lights agoing!*" said the valet once more. "*In 'is hevenin' clothes, an' in a drizzle of rain!*"

"Oh, you be damned!" cried Mr. Powers, rudely.

But ten minutes later, up in his mistress's pretty rose-and-white sitting-room, it was with an anxious eye and an unsteady hand that he proffered his menus and asked the orders for the day. Mrs. Buchanan herself, heavy-eyed and pale, as if she had slept ill, took notice of nothing. She despatched the day's business quickly, with some impatience, and, after that was finished, she hesitated a moment.

"Tell Patterson to ask Mr. Buchanan if it will be convenient for him to come to me here presently," she said.

The butler drew a quick breath.

"*Beg pardon, ma'am!*" said he, "*I—I—*" He had bent a little towards his mistress and lowered his voice, but at just that moment the housekeeper came into the room. Mr. Powers made a little sign with his head, and the woman, who stood in terror of him, slipped out again, closing the door after her.



“BEG PARDON, MA'AM . . . MR. BUCHANAN CAN'T BE FOUND,
MA'AM”

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"Beg pardon, ma'am," said the butler once more, in cautiously lowered tone. "Mr. Buchanan can't be found, ma'am. The lights in 'is—is 'eathen 'ouse is agoing, but 'e's not there, ma'am, nor yet in 'is bedroom, *nor* yet in the stables or gardens. We 'ave searched the place. 'E 'as gone in 'is hevenin' clothes *an'* leavin' the lights on."

Mr. Powers delivered his final sentence in a thrilling and dramatic whisper. Then, dramatic still—very appreciative of the theatric value of the moment—he drew back a step, bracing himself, as it were, and waited for the resultant outburst.

But there was no outburst. He had expected blank incredulity, scorn perhaps, perhaps tears—hysterics. None was forthcoming. His mistress sat perfectly still at her writing-table, her hands outstretched idly before her, for a rather long time. The butler began to wonder if she had heard him. Then, as he described it afterwards to the housekeeper, she turned her face up to him, "slowlike," not in astonishment, not even in surprise, it would seem, but white, very white, and still, uncomfortably, and hollow-eyed. "Deathly," Mr. Powers said, searching for a word. And she said, "Yes—yes, I know," in a sort of whisper. "Now 'ow in Gawd's name did *she* know?—I arsk you!" Thus the bewildered Powers.

And after another rather long time, during which she had stared fixedly across the room, she said,

"Send Horton!" Horton was her maid.

Mr. Powers tiptoed out of the room, his pendulous cheeks puffed, his eyes protruding. These mysteries were beyond him. Entered at his beck the excellent Horton, inwardly aboil with curiosity, outwardly calm as blue skies.

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"Mrs. Crowley," said the woman by the table, not looking up. "Ask her if she will be good enough to come to me here—at once." The maid went on her errand, and Mrs. Buchanan sat by the table, still, her hands idle before her—"deathly," as Mr. Powers had it.

Old Arabella, blinking, in a dressing-gown, haled from her bed and from the very midst of that last delicious hour of morning sleep, bustled in, cackling, after her fashion, resentment at this outrage upon her well-being, affection, curiosity, all in one inconsequent and uninterrupted stream. Béatrix lifted her arms from the table in a strange outward gesture. Her great eyes burned from that white face which was no longer still, and, at the sight, old Mrs. Crowley's chatter ceased with an audible click.

"Oh, dear child!" she cried. "What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"He's—gone!" said Béatrix Buchanan. "Herbert's gone—and he won't come back." Mrs. Crowley dropped into a chair, staring. It was some little time before words came to her.

"Dead?" she said, finally, in a whisper. But the other woman shook her head.

"No," she said, "I—think not. Just gone—disappeared during the night. They can find no trace of him. He went in his evening clothes, leaving the lights on. His bed wasn't touched. But oh, Aunt Arabella, I knew it before they told me! I knew it all!" She hid her face, sobbing. "I had a terrible dream," she said, "a hideous dream! I had it over and over again. I saw Herbert standing beside the big mosaic table down in his study. He was just starting away. I don't know how I knew that, but he looked at me with a—sneering grin, a nasty, sneer-

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ing, malicious grin, and he said, 'I'm done with you and with all of them. Let them think what they like and do what they like, I'm done with them!' He said, 'For once I shall be of interest to my friends—for the first time.' Then he laughed, and went away laughing. That's what I dreamed, over and over again, and when I waked this morning I knew it was true. I knew he had gone before Powers told me. Oh, Aunt Arabella, what shall I do?"

Another woman than Mrs. Crowley—one who had seen less and had suffered less, and, in consequence, believed less—would have laughed all this to scorn. She would have said: "My dear child, you have had a bad night. Your nerves are all wrong. This is hysteria. Your husband has gone out for a stroll, or, at the most, he has left the house in a fit of temper and will turn up, rather ashamed of himself, later in the day." But old Arabella sat silent. There be very strange things abroad, and she knew it. They had touched her life before. So she sat silent and allowed Béatrix Buchanan to weep for a little, unchecked. It was the best thing she could have done. But after a time, when the younger woman's fit of weakness had somewhat passed, she said:

"Dearest, I shall not waste time with exclaiming and protesting and such. I shall not try to soothe you. It seems not to be a time for that. Something strange has happened, evidently, and we must, as calmly as we may, get to the bottom of it. I have no doubt that it will prove simpler than you think, and that everything will right itself." To this small extent old Arabella allowed herself a gentle lie. In point of fact she felt great doubt. "Now who," said she, "brought you the news of Herbert's disappearance?"

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"Powers," said Béatrix Buchanan. And the old woman's sane, practical bearing seemed to quiet her; for the fear went out of her eyes slowly, and the trembling went from her hands.

"Send for Powers," said Mrs. Crowley.

They had him up, and, after him, the valet, and the two men told what they knew—little enough! Mrs. Crowley heard them through in silence, but at the end she drew a sigh.

"The child's right," she said, in her soul. And her soul stood aghast. "She's right. He has gone—God knows how!—and he won't come back." She was given to premonitions, Mrs. Crowley, like most old women. She had an odd, prophetic tendency. Sometimes her premonitions were wrong, but not often.

"Find out if M. Stambolof and Mr. Faring are down," she said to the valet. "And if they are, ask them to come here."

They came at once, looking surprise and grave concern, and again the meagre little story was gone over. It was characteristic of both men that they took it with perfect calm, without outcry or show of astonishment. Young Faring said nothing at all. Stambolof made a single half-audible exclamation and nodded his head. He was thinking of the tired, despondent droop of Buchanan's shoulders as he had gone, alone, out of the drawing-room on the night before, rebuffed by the only man he had counted upon to bear him company and, it may be, sympathy, alone to his lonely vigil and—what?

It was also characteristic that, after the first little silence, it was Faring who squared his shoulders and proceeded to take command of the situation. Old Arabella Crowley, sitting by, nodded her white head,

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and, had he been there, Colonel Eversley would have nodded, too, with satisfaction over a judgment proved sound. Faring was the one to lead a cause. Stambolof had been too long out of action. His armor was rusty and his hand had lost its quickness.

Young Faring turned to where Béatrix Buchanan sat still and white.

"I had been meaning to go away to-day, Béatrix," he said—"up to town—but, if you don't mind, I think I'll stay on. I—may be of service." And the woman gave him a little, swift, imploring glance.

"Oh yes, yes, Harry," she said, under her breath. "Yes, you must stay on. I need you. I—you mustn't go now. You must help me."

"Right," said he. "I stay." There was in his voice and in his manner no hint of the strain, the ill-hidden passion which had been there the evening before. There was something for him to do now, and action took possession of him, thrusting all else out of the way. He nodded to the butler, who was waiting just inside the door of the room.

"I want to have a look down below," he said, and, as he moved away, touched Stambolof's arm, so that the elder man followed him out and down the stairs.

He spoke again as they crossed the lower hall.

"Has the man done for himself?" he asked Stambolof. "I've been thinking of last night and of what you said about his being near his rope's-end. Has he gone beyond and done for himself?"

"Very much stranger things have happened," said the Russian. "Yes, if you ask me, I think he has. Of course, one's first thought must be that he has simply gone off in a rage, and will come back during the day or during the week, but—I've an odd feeling

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that he won't. He was in a bad way, nervously, last night. Eh, poor old Buchanan! He was none too happy."

They reached the narrow passage which led to the out-building. Mr. Powers was ahead, opening doors.

"Have you also thought," said Stambolof, gently, "how singularly fortunate it would be for every one concerned if it should turn out to be true—that the man *has* done for himself?"

"Oh, for God's sake," cried young Faring, and began to tremble—"for God's sake, don't talk about that! I don't want to think of it. Man, I mustn't think of it!"

So began that long and wholly futile search for Herbert Buchanan, dead or alive. Young Faring led it, and he never tired. No man could have done more. The staff of the household he set to work searching. The police of the neighboring town, pledged to secrecy, scoured the neighborhood. Picked men of a certain very famous detective agency came from far away to help. No stone was left unturned, no slightest clew neglected. At last, after a week of keen effort, when no trace of the missing man could be found, the case was publicly turned over to the police, and it was then that, over your morning coffee, the Buchanan mystery fronted you in big, black letters with a bad portrait of Buchanan, and beside it one of an obscure theatrical lady—this purporting to represent the anxious wife.

Of course, early in the investigation the question of the man with the scarred face arose, and for a long time Faring's efforts were almost wholly devoted to tracing this person's movements. But, after all, there

THE NEXT DAY

seemed no good reason for believing that he had had anything to do with Buchanan's vanishing. After all, a tramp, a vagabond, even a possible malefactor, cannot pick up another human being and, with his burden, disappear from the earth. Beyond that, what motive could the man have had? The gardeners who on that fateful evening had been set on watch testified to have seen the wanderer loitering along the high-road outside the gates. They said that they had warned him away, and he had gone, apparently without malice or resentment, stealing a lift upon the tail of a farmer's wagon bound for the nearest town. In explanation of his presence near the gates he had told the gardeners that on the day before the master had given him a five-dollar bill. This, he said, was somewhat unique in his experience; so unique that he had wondered if the phenomenon might not, upon request, repeat itself—the lightning strike twice in the same spot.

Could the man have returned during the night and effected an entrance into Buchanan's out-house? The gardeners, as one man, said, "Perish the thought!" It was quite impossible. The place had been guarded as it if were a military camp well into the morning. Exit, then, as a player in the tragedy, the man with the scar.

Remained what? It would seem nothing. Never was a disappearance so puzzling, so absolute.

II

THE TWO WAYS OF LOVING

THUS days passed—weeks—a month dragged by, and the Buchanan mystery remained unsolved. You who knew of it only through the daily press had long ago tired and forgotten. A score of equally exciting sensations had thrilled your jaded ears since—and had been forgotten, too; but the little, faithful circle which clung about Buchanan's wife—because it loved her—remembered still, only its last resources seemed to be exhausted, its last bolts shot.

The Eversleys had, of course, gone some time before this. Their many engagements had called them, and they had departed breathing—good souls!—sympathy and sorrow; but old Arabella Crowley remained, Stambolof, the man of sorrows, remained, and little Alianor Trevor and Harry Faring.

Faring and Béatrix Buchanan sat, one morning at the end of this month, in a certain open pavilion, a Japanese summer-house which perched upon a knoll beyond the gardens looking seaward over a slope of moor to the broken cliffs where the tide sucked and plashed and made its eternal moan. And they talked of what had been done during the past weeks and—rather hopelessly—of what still must be done towards finding the man who was lost.

“And so, Harry,” said Mrs. Buchanan—“so here we

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are, at a whole month's end, after all the work that has been done, all the skill that has been expended, not one step the nearer to our goal. We know no more than we knew on that first dreadful morning. I suppose, if one could quite put aside one's personal feeling, if one could look at it all quite from the outside, as a—a case, a mystery, one would call it almost unparalleled. I suppose there have been very few mysteries so absolutely baffling."

"Oh," said young Faring, a bit doubtfully—"oh, hardly that, I should think. People disappear very often, really. Only one seldom has any immediate interest in the case, and so one forgets. Oh no, disappearances—complete ones—are not so rare, after all." He looked curiously at the woman's face as she sat staring before her out to sea; for he was a bit surprised at her speech. It sounded to him almost callous, almost unfeeling. And as if she read his thought she turned her eyes at once, and a bit of color came into her white cheeks.

"I—I expect that sounded almost hard, didn't it, Harry?" she said. "Well, somehow, all this horror has managed to make me hard—rather. It's as if I had been through all the feeling that one is capable of and had come into a sort of torpor. Now and then—just as a moment ago—I find myself thinking of what has happened in the most oddly impersonal fashion. Yes, it has dulled me, sort of." She looked away again for a little space, and when she spoke kept her face averted as if she wished not to meet the man's eyes.

"There's no use in pretending, I suppose," she said. "Not to you, anyhow, Harry. I—didn't love him, you know. I almost hated him. And now I should

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be a hypocrite to pretend that in losing him I have lost something that was dear to me. . . . Harry!" She faced him, and her eyes burned with a strange, sudden fierceness—"Harry, he went away of his own accord. Wherever he went—whatever has happened to him since—he went deliberately. I'm as certain of that as that I'm alive and talking to you here. I feel it all through and through me. I'm as sure as if I had seen him. Indeed, I *did* see him in that awful dream. It came again and again and again, all through that night, and I believe piously that God sent it to me to let me know—to make me sure, as I *am* sure; so that I should suffer less afterwards, as I *do* suffer less now—less, I mean, than as if I thought Herbert had been—had been—had had something terrible happen to him, had been taken away against his will. He went of his own volition, Harry, as a last stroke of malice. It was the cruelest thing he could do, and so he did it. Oh, I knew him better than you did—better than any one. He has been nothing but malice for a long time—malice personified!"

"Betty! Betty!" cried young Faring, and laid a hand on her arm.

"Don't!" he said. "You—hurt! I don't like to think of you thinking things like that, even if they're true. It's—too much like reviling a dead man. You know, Betty, he—Buchanan may be—dead, you know."

The woman gave a quick sob.

"I know," she said, after a little. "Don't—don't say any more, Harry. You—shame me!" She looked up into his eyes, and, because her own eyes were wet and very full of pain and suffering, and—much else, Faring looked quickly away. He had unusual powers of self-restraint, but he needed them all.

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"You're a better man than I am, Harry," said she, and gave a little forlorn laugh at her words. "You're fairer and juster and infinitely more generous. That will be because you're a man, I expect. Women aren't fair—or generous, either. And beyond that I fancy I'm not a very good woman even as women go. Oh, I mean it!" as Faring gave an exclamation of protest. "I'm not a bit strong and—and steadfast and enduring like some women I know. I'm rebellious, horribly, and I resent things. I resent them until I'd do almost anything to end my suffering. No, I'm not very good, but I haven't been very happy, either. You can't blame a woman for feeling bitter and resentful—for feeling that she's been cheated out of her life when she has had to endure what I've endured. Oh!" she cried, almost in anger, "a man's such a God! such a passionless judge! And you're such a *man*, Harry, sitting there with your lips shut tight and your brows down over your eyes. You're disapproving of me altogether, aren't you? You're thinking that I'm nothing but a bundle of nerves and weakness and spite. Maybe I am. If so, I can't help it. I'm a woman, you see, and—I wanted so to be happy! Harry, I want my happiness. They took it from me long ago, and said, 'You mustn't have it any more,' and now it's further and further away from me than ever; but I want it. I want to be happy."

"I would to God, Betty," said the man who loved her, teeth set together, hands clenched, eyes turned steadfastly away—"I would to God you might have it. I would give all my life and any small hopes I may have of a life to come if only I might bring your happiness back to you, for it seems to me the thing most worth doing of all the things there are."

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Mrs. Buchanan wept for a moment with her hands over her face, but the man did not stir or turn towards her. He was a strong man.

"I want to be happy," she said again, after a little time, but the anger, the strength of feeling, was gone from her voice, leaving it very hopeless and weak. "And now," she said, "I never shall be. I never can be by any possibility. I'm chained, and the other end of the chain is lost somewhere in the dark. I can never be—" She raised her head suddenly, and a change came over her face, an odd, startled look.

"Unless—" she said, in a whisper, and stopped. She turned a swift glance upon the man beside her, but he was looking away. "Unless—" she said again, and got no further, but sat wide-eyed, staring, clasping and unclasping her hands before her in her lap.

"Harry," she said, presently, very low, "when a man—is lost, disappears, leaving no trace behind him, when he doesn't come back, and nothing can be learned of whether he is alive or dead, what eventually happens—legally, I mean? What becomes of his—property and such? Oh, don't misunderstand me! I'm not so low as that. I have plenty of money of my own. Still, I must know about such things. Surely, when time goes on, and the man doesn't return, the law must finally presume him—dead. Surely there must be some period set for that—a year?—two years?"

Young Faring looked at her and met her eager eyes, saw the flush of sudden excitement in her cheeks. "Then," she cried, not waiting for him to speak—"then I should be—free! Don't you see? Don't you understand? I should be free! A year or two to wait. Oh, do you think I'm hard—heartless? I don't

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care, I'm half mad. To be free, Harry! A little year or two to wait, and then freedom! You don't know what that word means." She began to laugh hysterically, but at the look in Faring's eyes the laugh broke and died. "What—is it?" she whispered.

"Oh, Betty," said he, "the law's not very kind. It takes no heed of tears."

"How long?" said Béatrix Buchanan.

"Five years, Betty," said he, and she gave a little, low cry under her breath.

"It isn't — true!" she said, staring at him. "It can't be true. Five *years*? That's monstrous, unbelievable! No law could be so cruel. Five years? I don't believe you."

"I'm afraid you must, Betty," said he. "The law says five years. But, after all, during those five years you *are* free in a measure — granting that your—granting that he does not come back. You're free of *him*, and that's the real point. As for the property, that doesn't matter, for you have plenty of means of your own."

Mrs. Buchanan sank back in her chair with a tired sigh, and she shook her head, watching the man beside her with a certain miserable, unwilling admiration. He had wholly misunderstood, wholly lost the point of her thought, and, grudgingly, she loved him the better for it. As she had said in her poor little jest, he was a better man than she. That sudden blinding flash of hope and joy which had burst upon her had seemingly passed him quite by, even though he loved her. Watching his square face with a sort of dull, despairing curiosity, she wondered if it really *had* passed him quite by, or if that unassailable sense of honor, that angel with the flaming sword which stood

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at the gate of his mind, had first recognized it, and then, untouched by temptation, had driven it away. Something which was almost like anger woke in her that she should be so frail, so torn with grief and bitterness and love, and he so coolly, unshakenly sure of himself, so untouched by the storm which swayed her. Woman-like, she had a mad impulse to break him down, to drag him to the torment when she writhed, to make him like herself; but even as she thought of this she knew that, once broken, once shorn of his strength, she must despise him, and her last prop be gone. It was his great strength that she loved, though she beat angry hands against its bulwarks. She called him bitter things as she sat there watching. She said that he was cold. She said that he was a prig, but she knew that those were lies, for young Faring was as far from a prig as any man can well be, and he loved her more than most men ever love anything — probably far more than she had, up to this time, loved him or any one. It might well be summed up, she said to herself, in this manner. If Faring should turn suddenly and beg her to go away with him, leaving all the wretched tangle to right itself as best it might or remain forever a tangle, she would go, for her suffering and her long resentment had made her very weak; but afterwards she would despise him and herself so long as she lived, and she would die at last shamed and miserable. If, on the other hand, she herself were to propose such a thing to Faring, he would refuse outright to allow her so to ruin her life, but he would understand, and would go on loving her exactly the same as before, knowing that, for a moment, she had been tempted beyond the limits of her self-control.

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That was how they loved each other, she said, sitting in the little Japanese summer-house and staring across at the square face of the man who would not stoop. And she admitted that his love was infinitely the better as well as the greater, and she knew that presently she would be very glad that it was what it was, but, for the moment, she thought she almost hated him. And that was very like a woman.

"Oh yes, yes," she said, and Faring looked up in surprise at the childish resentment of her tone. "Of course," she said, "it is easy for you to take that cheerful tone and to speak of such an existence as 'freedom.' It isn't you who'll go to bed every night of those five years in despair and wake in the morning with terror—terror that the day may bring—bring—Oh, can't you see how unbearably horrible it must be? Of course, you can't, though!"

"No, of course," said young Faring, quietly, but at that she turned, sobbing, and caught at his arm.

"Oh, Harry!" she cried, "don't listen to me, don't pay any heed to me! I'm not responsible for any mad thing I may say. Don't despise me, if you can help, Harry. I'm very, very wretched. I didn't mean that—truly, truly! I'm not so hard and ungrateful as I seem. I'm only unhappy, and—a woman. Forgive me, Harry. You must, because you're all I've got now. I lean upon you. If you desert me when I'm horrid to you, I shall die."

Young Faring's cheeks flushed, and he gave a little, nervous laugh.

"There's no question of desertion, Betty," said he. "You know that, I think. I don't desert the colors I've enlisted under. I shall see it through."

"Yes," she said, whispering, and a sort of peace

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came, as it were, visibly, over her. "Yes," she said, "you'll see it through, Harry. I know. Thank God for that. I sha'n't have to fear your deserting, shall I? After all, I'm not so badly off. I sha'n't despair. And now," she said, after a little pensive silence—"now no more of this weeping and rebellion. Have done with that! Let us talk very soberly. Tell me exactly what you think of it all. Do you think he—he went away of his own accord—as I cannot help thinking? Do you think he is alive somewhere now, and that he will one day come back, or—do you think he has—is—dead—that something terrible has happened to him? You've had your thoughts, your theories—however little evidence there may be for them. What do you think?"

Young Faring hesitated, frowning down upon his clasped hands as he sat leaning forward.

"Theories," he said at last. "Oh yes, theories. What are theories worth? I've nothing to prove them by. Oh yes, I've had plenty of theories. We all have had, but where's the good? We have no facts. And still, Betty," he said, after another little frowning silence—"still, with little or nothing to go on, I'm somehow as certain as you are that he—"

"That he went of his own accord!" she cried out.

"Yes," said young Faring. "He went of his own accord. The dress clothes, and the lights left on, and all that were a blind, I think, left to puzzle us. There's one more thing. I didn't discover it until last week. It seems that he had a fairly large sum of money—nearly two thousand dollars in bills—presumably in the safe that stands in his study. I found it out from his bankers. He drew it only two or three days before he disappeared. That was not extraordinary,

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because it seems that he was in the habit of keeping such a sum by him. Only—this time he had had no chance to spend it before he went away. He took it with him. The safe is empty, and it has not been forced or broken into. The lock is in order. You see, he must have taken the money with him. Now, here's an important point. He'll need more presently. That sum won't last long, for he is not in the habit of making a little go a long way. He wouldn't know how. One day, before long, he must come back, or else in some fashion draw upon his bankers. If he does that we shall know he's alive somewhere."

"And," said Mrs. Buchanan—"and if—not?"

"Why, if not, Betty," said the man—"if not, then—it's no proof, of course, it's only evidence—then we shall have to think that something has happened to him. So it seems to me."

"Yes," she said, quietly. "Yes," and fell to staring away, out over the sea where the little waves curled, crisply blue, and the gulls wheeled and dipped, white over the blue, and, beyond, the white sails of yachts dipped like the gulls, wheeling also, and bore away towards the far horizon and the single trail of smoke which lay in a motionless, dim streak across the sky.

"And so," said Béatrix Buchanan, "it resolves itself again, does it not, into waiting—just waiting? I wonder how long I shall be able to bear it—the strain, the uncertainty. I wonder— Oh, what a world, Harry! What a world!"

"Mrs. Crowley is coming down from the house," said Faring.

She looked up the long, green slope of lawn to where, among the flowering shrubs, old Arabella moved in slow majesty, the tail of her dress caught safely up over one

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arm, the other arm pressing to a capacious bosom three small books bound in bright-yellow paper. Several paces to the rear a maid followed under a burden of rugs and pillows. Still behind marched a footman bearing drinkables on a large tray.

Mrs. Buchanan began to laugh.

"Observe the procession," said she. "It is only too evident that Aunt Arabella meditates a debauch. Cushions, things to drink, *and* yellow-paper novels. Oh, dreadful!" The laugh died, and she drew a little sigh. "Dear old Aunt Arabella!" she said. "What should I do without her—without all of you? You're much too good for me, you know. I fancy I'm not worth it. No, no. Don't protest, Harry. That was much too obvious a trap. What vices I'm acquiring, am I not? Fancy descending to that! Only—you *are* such dears, all of you—and *you* above all. Oh, yes, above all, *you*, Harry. You give so much and ask nothing, expect nothing. That's beyond me, you know. I'm cheaper clay. Yes, really I am. I ought to know. Hush! Here's Aunt Arabella."

Mrs. Crowley came to a ponderous halt outside the Japanese summer-house, and with disfavor regarded the two who sat within.

"Oh," she said, "you two here? And I had promised myself a long afternoon of lonely and vicious ease." She displayed the three yellow-covered books.

"These," she boasted, "are new, and of a singular and unparalleled wickedness. I have it on the word of Jacqueline de Courcey, who sent them to me, and Jacqueline never lies. Now you have spoiled my day."

"We might read them aloud," suggested young Faring, but old Arabella scouted the idea.

"Never!" she said. "Never! You are much too

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young. I, on the contrary, am ancient, and my morals can no longer be destroyed. The books *must* wait, poor dears!—Yes,” to the maid, “put those cushions in the big chair. I will at least be comfortable. What? Yes, yes; you will have to bring more glasses, I expect. Dear, dear, all my plans upset! This is a cruel, cruel world.”

With much assistance and many groans and protests, she was packed into the big willow chair, and the yellow books were stowed away under the cushions. Then she lay back and closed her eyes, panting gently and waving a large palm-leaf fan.

“That,” she said, after a time, pointing a vague hand towards the landscape without opening her eyes—“that is champagne-cup. You shall have some of it when the other glasses come. As for me, really, I think I must have a sip at once. I am very warm. Yes, thanks, straws. Two straws. One is always broken. Ah, that is truly delicious! Who invented champagne-cup? Does any one know? Not that it matters at all. The result is with us. I dare say the man who invented it was never able to afford champagne, poor wretch. I expect he drank beer and dreamed about inventing some wonderful mixture of that which should be at the same time agreeable and cheap. Why are things never both agreeable and cheap? Can any one tell me? Presently, you know, the Jews will have all the money—*all* of it—and then the rest of us will no longer drink champagne-cup. We shall have to drink beer. How very unpleasant!”

Old Arabella closed her eyes again somnolently, and the dregs of liquid spilled out of the long glass and ran down into her lap.

“Dear, dear!” she said, “is it spilled? Ah, well, there

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is more, thank Heaven! The Jews haven't yet got it all. Why does not that man bring the other glasses? You should scold him, Béatrix, angel." She opened one eye.

"Oh, they are here already?" she said. "How quick of him! Tell me, is it not delicious? You might even have some more brought. I'm sure we shall all be very thirsty, because the day is so warm. There, I have dropped my fan. Oh, thank you! And another glass of champagne-cup? How clever you are to have felt that I wanted it! I did. Dear me, *both* of these straws are broken somewhere. They won't work. I have never known more than one to be spoiled before. One always is. I wonder why?"

Old Arabella pensively drank the second glass of champagne-cup, and thereafter appeared to fall asleep. But one never could be sure of Arabella. She usually did the unexpected thing. And in this instance talk flowed from her at intervals apparently out of a profound slumber, like unlooked-for lava from a quiet volcano.

"I left Ellen Trevor and Stambolof on the east veranda of the house," she said. "As usual, the child had been stalking him for some hours, and had, at last, cornered him there. She seemed very tremulous and very happy over running the poor man to earth. I couldn't bear it, so I came away. They were talking about her soul when I left—at least, *she* was. It appears that it is a most unusual soul—a sad, sweet, unappreciated one. Poor Stambolof! He looked like some large, solemn dog—a Borzoi, for choice—being annoyed by a kitten."

Béatrix Buchanan laughed.

"You sha'n't abuse Alianor Trevor!" she protested.

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"She's a sweet child, Aunt Arabella, and I love her very dearly."

"Quite so, angel," said the old woman, still apparently deep in slumber. "So do I. And I will not quarrel with you. So heap insult and calumny upon my ancient head as you will. I shall not strike you. Or isn't 'calumny' the word I want? Just what does calumny mean? Can no one tell me? 'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny,' as what's-his-name so cleverly said. Can one be chaste as ice and pure as snow if one reads wicked, yellow-covered books, I wonder? Thank you, dear Harry. The tiniest sip more. You are so kind."

"Alianor's going at the end of the week," said the other woman. "She doesn't know it yet, but she's going. Three different people, to my knowledge, want her at Newport and two at other places. She's staying on here for my sake, but I won't have it any longer. I won't cage her up here when she ought to be away having a good time."

"Inhospitable hussy!" rumbled old Arabella from the depths of her chair.

"And you're going, too, Aunt Arabella," pursued Mrs. Buchanan, "and Stambolof. He really has to go. He told me this morning. And Harry. I'm going to turn you all out."

Arabella Crowley sat up among her cushions in wrathful astonishment.

"Well, of all the—the absurd nonsense!" she cried. "You're mad—quite mad. I go? I sha'n't stir a step. Why should I go?"

"Because you're neglecting a thousand things and people to be here," said the young woman. "You're leaving everything at Red Rose and in town at loose

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ends just to bear me company. All of you are giving up things that you ought not to, every day, and I won't have it any longer. Oh, I'm quite serious! I mean it. You must go and leave me alone. I shall do well enough. It's—it's only waiting now. We can do no more, neither you nor I. We can only wait. I've been thinking it over very seriously. I shall stay here for a month or two longer, waiting, and if there is no news, if no change comes, I shall go abroad for the autumn and winter. No. Don't argue, please. I'm quite determined, really. It's the best thing to do. I'll come to you for a while at Red Rose later on if you want me, Aunt Arabella. But just now I rather want to be alone. I don't know just why. Maybe I want to think. Maybe it's that. I've never done much thinking. It will amuse me, I expect. Yes, you must go at the end of the week when Alianor goes."

III

BÉATRIX CONTENDS WITH DEVILS

AND they went, as Béatrix insisted. They went—all but little Alianor Trevor—fairly driven from the place. Stambolof left on the next day; for he was called over to London on affairs of some importance, and had to have a day or two in New York before sailing. Mrs. Crowley and Faring went at the end of the week, old Arabella to her country-place on the Sound, at Baychester, and Faring up to town, whence he meant to go to the upper Adirondacks and join some people on St. Regis.

He had no more talk with Béatrix alone in those last two or three days. She seemed to avoid all opportunities for a tête-à-tête, and in a way he was not sorry; for he was very determined to betray no feeling to her beyond the rather intimate friendship which the two had tacitly adopted, and this was not only difficult, but was, he felt, growing more difficult as time went on and he saw more of her and grew more and more to count upon her presence near him.

He was an uncommonly simple man—which is not in the least to say a fool or stupid or dull. His mind moved without the indirections of more complex and imaginative people's, and he had therefore fewer refuges, fewer safety retreats into which to draw back from his own impulses or from the world. There was

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something refreshingly primitive about him—primitive without being either cruel or rough. He knew quite well that his love for Béatrix Buchanan was the one very great and overwhelming thing in his career, and that it would never under any conceivable circumstances die. He had frankly to face the fact; for that elemental simplicity of his would not allow him to hide it from himself. Many men and most women become adepts at lying to themselves—though they may be essentially truthful to others—because it often saves their self-esteem and always makes their march through life easier. But men of Faring's type are denied such comfort. They are constitutionally incapable of self-deceit.

And knowing the strength and endurance of this love in him, young Faring was in constant terror lest, in an unguarded moment, the love should sway him beyond his control and another scene like that of the evening of his arrival at Buchanan Lodge occur. He held his honor exceedingly high, higher than anything else conceivable save the honor of Béatrix Buchanan, and that is why he was glad to leave the place, though it was like cutting a limb from his body to look ahead into the days when he would no longer see her moving before him or hear her voice or know that she was in the same house.

The night before the morning on which he was to leave he remained down-stairs some time after the three women had gone up. He was alone, of course, since Stambolof was no longer there. And he went out upon the terrace and so down to the broad stretch of lawn which lay alongside the west wing of the Lodge. He knew which of the windows above him were Mrs. Buchanan's, and he walked up and down in

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the dark, watching them where they glowed yellow with their drawn blinds and curtains. He watched till the lights went out. It was a boyish thing to do—a florid, over-romantic act for this sober century. Another sort of man might have done it, but it must have been with an inward, half-ashamed grin, with the tongue in the cheek. Young Faring, however, whose sense of humor was, in the big things of life, at least, none too keen, took it quite seriously. It did not occur to him that what he did was at all ridiculous.

When the lights were out he found a stone seat near and sat there staring up at the darkened windows. He pictured the woman whom he loved lying there in her bed, her eyes wide, fronting the dark, hopeless, shrinking, fearing, dreading the morning's light, and the thought that he could not comfort her or lighten her burden waked him to a sort of fury of bitterness and protest. Of what value was his love, his faithfulness, his strength, if he could do no more than sit by while she suffered. It came to him that to-morrow night and untold nights thereafter he could not even sit by, could not even bestow the poor comfort of a sympathetic eye and hand, and his face twisted suddenly in a swift spasm that might have been physical pain.

"If I could only *do* something, Betty!" he groaned in the dark. "If I could only help somehow!"

The blind of one of the windows above him ran up, and some one in white came to the window and stood there a moment, dim in the moonlight, looking out into the gloom. Faring, in the shadows below, held his breath. It was Béatrix Buchanan. He knew so well her littlest trick of pose or of movement that even

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at that distance and in that faint light he could not mistake her.

She stood in the window for only an instant, then turned back once more into the inner gloom, but the man in the night below stretched out shaking arms towards her, and the veins beat and throbbed at his temples.

"Betty!" he cried, whispering. "Betty! Oh, what's to become of you and me, Betty? How's all this horror going to end?" And then:

"Good-night, child. Oh, sleep well! For the last time, Betty, good-night!"

In the morning, while the trap was waiting for him outside, he had a moment alone with her. She was very white, he thought, and hollow-eyed. She had *not* slept well, it would seem, in spite of his prayer.

"And so good-bye, Betty, dear," he said. "You know where I am to be. When you need me or want me I'll come. Remember that. I shall never be far away. I'm still—under the colors, you know." And he tried to smile. Mrs. Buchanan's eyes were upon his, sombre and burning, with an odd strain in them. She nodded.

"I know, Harry," she said, under her breath. "And—and it's more of a comfort to me than I could even try to tell you, but for a while I must be alone. I need to think. Oh, go, Harry; go quickly, quickly!" She pushed him with her hands, and, behind his back, he heard her beginning to sob.

He went without a word, but his eyes were blind. He groped for the seat of the cart with his two hands.

Little Miss Trevor would not go with the others. She refused to be driven forth.

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"Please let me stay on," she begged. "I don't want to go to those people at Newport. I don't want to go anywhere where it's gay and they're having a noisy good time. I want to be entirely quiet. If you won't let me stay here with you I shall go down to the Mannerings, or some one like that, and ask them to take me in. Please let me stay on, Béatrix."

Mrs. Buchanan took the girl in her arms and held her off a little, looking curiously into her face. It suddenly occurred to her that Miss Trevor looked rather ill—that her eyes were different, tired seeming, with something new, something like distress in them. Also she was thinner, the elder woman thought, and paler than usual.

"Baby, dear!" she cried—little Miss Trevor was one of those girls who are foredoomed to be called "baby" by their friends—"what in the world has come over you? What do you want to hide yourself for? It's not like you at all. One might think you in love." And then, suddenly, she paused, and certain half-noticed, half-forgotten things flashed through her mind, and she caught the girl up to her and held her close, stroking the yellow hair and murmuring over her as a mother comforts and croons to a little child.

"Oh, you poor, dear baby!" she said, "you blessed infant! I didn't know. Truly, I didn't know. Oh, baby, I'm a fool, a blind, benighted fool! I've been so drowned in my own woes! I might have seen! Yes, you shall stay! I wanted you frightfully all the while, but I thought I should be imprisoning you. You shall stay, dear! You *must* stay! We're two lonely women whom God hasn't been very good to. There isn't much comfort for us, so we must comfort each other. Oh, child, child, why need *you* have been

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hurt? Wasn't I enough in one house?" And then the two wept a little on each other's shoulders, and, woman-like, seemed much relieved.

"Does *he* know, dear?" demanded Mrs. Buchanan, when they were sitting together afterwards. The girl raised a startled, horrified face.

"Oh no, no!" she cried. "He doesn't guess at all. No; he must never know. It would only hurt him, dearest, and that mustn't be. Oh no, he must never guess. He—he has had enough sorrow and tragedy in his life. I don't want to add to it. I cannot drive out of my mind a thing that horrid Colonel Eversley said of him that—that evening after dinner. He said: 'Stambolof's a sort of walking tombstone. One doesn't think of Stambolof as doing anything nowadays,' he said. 'He's done it all. He's waiting to die.' It was a horrible thing to say. It made me shiver, but I can't forget it because it's—oh, dearest, it's true! He *doesn't* really live any more because his heart is dead long ago. He just goes on existing."

"I know," said Béatrix, gently — "I know. It's true. And those men who have had tremendous tragedies in their lives and have died, all but physically, are always loved by women afterwards. There's something about them, I don't know what it is, but it's fatal to our poor little hearts, baby, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," said the girl. "I don't know. I've never known any one like him, and I never shall. Probably I shall never see him again, but I'm—anyhow, I'm glad. Oh yes, I'm glad. I'm glad it has happened."

"Ay, child," said Béatrix Buchanan, smiling wanly out across the girl's head. "We love the fire that burns us—being women."

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So these two took up their life of watching and waiting at Buchanan Lodge — scarcely watching, though, for the time for that seemed past. They had, by this time, small hope of Herbert Buchanan's return. That is not to say that the efforts to trace him were quite at an end. A quiet, careful search was still going on at the hands of those skilled men brought for the purpose from far away, but at the Lodge there was no sign of this. The two women led their uneventful existence, seldom going out, seldom receiving any one, though sometimes old Arabella Crowley motored over from Red Rose, bustling, after her kindly wont, with cheer and gossip and nonsense, flowing with ceaseless talk as a spring flows with water, and stayed the night with them. In the main they were alone, and it must have been an odd life they led there. At a venture one must have called them ill-suited to be so cloistered together for weeks upon weeks, but as danger draws men together and establishes intimacy where otherwise intimacy could never have grown, so sorrow and suffering does with women, and so this girl, with what she imagined to be her broken heart, and this woman whose soul wrestled alternately with angels and with devils, who, in an inner furnace of passion and bitterness and remorse and pain, forged for herself out of warring elements a new nature which, good or bad, was to endure; these two came very close to each other, welding in those days a friendship as deep and lasting as can exist here on earth, much deeper and more lasting than most women ever know; for, in general, women's friendships with each other are unstable things.

They had, Miss Trevor says, many long and intimate talks, and in these talks, however or upon what-

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ever subject they may have begun, Mrs. Buchanan managed always to come to the man who was lost, and, for all they knew, dead. She spoke of him at first hesitatingly, a bit timidly, and contrived to make his introduction into the talk seem accidental, but later she spoke with a freedom that was almost eagerness. It seemed, now the man was gone, that she could for the first time approach their relationship—their life together—nay, rather apart—with calmness, with a fair mind. It seemed that for the first time she could sit, as it were, in judgment, laying aside that bitter resentment which had so long cloaked her, and ascribe blame where blame was due, credit where credit belonged.

"I wasn't always fair to him," she would say. "He had so much inside himself to contend with, and I never realized that. I was too wretched and bitter and resentful to realize anything save my own misery. No, I wasn't fair to him. I never helped. I only sat alone and was sorry for myself. I ought to have been sorry for him, too, but it never occurred to me. That will have been because I didn't love him, I suppose. Never you marry anybody you don't love. Oh, how trite and banal of me! And so," she would sum up, "I cannot feel angry at him any more—not for all that time. That was my fault as well as his. Only the last—the going away I can never forgive. That's beyond me, and it always will be. No, I can't forgive him that—not even if he's—dead. That was deliberate malice—I'm sure of it, just as the nasty little speech he made at dinner was deliberate malice. I don't believe God expects us to forgive things like that, baby. Anyhow, I can't. I expect I'm not a forgiving sort of person in big things. Only very

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strong people can forgive, and I'm not strong, you see."

This sort of thing Miss Trevor says she would say over and over again with a sort of fierceness as if she were arguing with herself. The subject seemed to have a morbid fascination for her. She seemed possessed of a sort of passion for laying bare, so far as she might, all that she had felt for and about poor Buchanan during their marriage, for picking out and examining all her old motives, not so much by way of self-justification as to determine where lay the preponderance of blame. It seemed that she must determine where lay the blame for those two spoiled lives—in herself or in the man who was gone.

And Miss Trevor says that her hostess used to leave the house for hours together, spending whole mornings or afternoons alone in that little Japanese pavilion which sat upon the slope, or walking along the crest of the cliff above the sea or on the beach at the cliff's foot. And she would come in from these hours of solitude drooping, pale in spite of the sun, hollow-eyed as if unspeakably tired. Miss Trevor realized, she says, that the woman was undergoing a great struggle, was passing through a crisis which was vital to her, but in spite of the intimacy which had come between them she dared not ask questions or seem to pry into anything upon which Mrs. Buchanan kept silence. And later she was glad that she had held her tongue; for, towards the end of August, when they had been living in this fashion for nearly two months, Mrs. Buchanan seemed to fall into a calm. The pallor went from her cheeks and the hunted, strained look went out of her eyes. It was as if she

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had been for a long time suffering a bodily illness and was at last recovering her normal health.

Quite of her own accord she spoke of it one day as the two sat together on the terrace after dinner.

"I have been groping in the dark," she said, "struggling and fighting for peace of soul, and, thank Heaven, it has at last come to me—in some measure at least. I expect that if I were like some women—oh, most women, I dare say—I should not have had to go through all this. Most women have such a store of patience and moral fortitude. I haven't. I never had. I'm a most dreadful person, baby, dear. Truly I am. I resent injury more bitterly than any one I ever knew, and I have always felt that my marriage and—and this latter horror were injuries; that they were inflicted upon me by other people. I've always felt that I hadn't a chance for happiness—the chance other girls have. Now—I'm less sure. Probably it hasn't quite all been burned out of me—the bitterness, I mean. But—does it sound theatrical and silly? I believe I'm a better woman. Indeed, I do. Please don't laugh at me, child. If you laugh I shall cry. This is how I feel about it: I blame myself for a large share of my own unhappiness and for—his, Herbert's. I wasn't very kind to him. I didn't love him, and so I didn't try to come near him, ever. I let us grow further and further apart instead of doing my best to draw him to me. I let him grow into the sort of man he was towards the last. Possibly I might have prevented it if I'd tried hard enough. I don't know about that. Anyhow, up to that last night I know I was at fault. For his going I hold myself blameless. That was unforgivable, and I cannot forgive it. It is odd, is it not, how perfectly sure I am, always have

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been, that he went of his own will? It isn't that I want to think so, to clear my own skirts. I'm simply sure of it in some quite mysterious and inexplicable fashion. So I've purged me of bitterness and resentment, and I've done more than that. I've done what was more difficult still, and that is I've come to a sort of resignation over the present and the future. That wasn't easy, dear. It has wrung me sorely, for—well, there's—Harry Faring."

"Ah, I know, dearest, I know," said the girl. "That's the cruel part. *I* know."

"Yes," she said, nodding, "that's the cruel part. It means that I must put the thoughts of—of the happiness that I—of that sort of happiness quite from me. It means that I must look upon a life alone as inevitable. I'm a thousand times worse off than a widow—worse off, even, than an unhappy wife, for she has a certain way out of misery open to her. No, I must be alone, and I've made myself face it and grow familiar with it and resigned to it. There are many levels of happiness, child. The upper levels are beyond my reach, it seems. The mountain-peaks I shall never climb, but I suppose one may live some sort of a plodding life down in the valleys where the—shadows are. At the worst there's peace there."

"But," said the girl, "they may yet find—Mr. Buchanan. He may yet come back, or they may find proof that he is—dead. There's always that possibility."

The elder woman shook her head.

"I have put that out of my mind," she said. "I dare not think of it, and I do not expect it to come. It is three months now, and there has been found no trace of him. He won't come back. I think he is—dead somewhere. But we shall never know."

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"And beyond that," persisted little Miss Trevor, "there's another thing. The law presumes him dead after a number of years."

"Five years," said Béatrix Buchanan. "In five years, child, I shall be thirty. In five years where will Harry Faring be?"

"Wherever he is," cried the girl, indignantly, "he will be as faithful to you as he is to-day, and you know it. He will love you as long as he lives, whether it's five years or forty or fifty."

"I know, I know," she said, gently, and a little smile came to her lips and trembled there, a sad little smile. "Oh yes," she said, "he will be faithful. He doesn't forget. He's not the sort to forget. But five years! Shall I keep a man bound to me for five long, empty, hopeless years? Ah, no, no! I couldn't bear that. And I wouldn't have him bear it either. It would be too cruel for us both. Besides—you know him a little—do you suppose he would—marry me without positive proof that Herbert is dead? Do you? *I* might do it. I'm not so strong as he is. I might steal my happiness and take the risks, but Harry—Harry's different. I'm glad he is. I should despise him if he were like me.

"And so," she said, after a little silence—"so I've come out of my struggles into something very like peace of mind. I can look my life in the face now very calmly without bursting into a passion and wringing my hands and wearing myself out with rebellion. I can begin to live—a gray life, if you like, not the sort of life I may have—dreamed of—but a life. I think I shall go abroad for the autumn and winter. I want a change. I want to get away from the Lodge for a long while. Perhaps I shall stay

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away for a year. Would you care to come with me?"

"Ah, yes," said little Miss Trevor, quickly. "Let me go with you. There is nothing to keep me here. Aunt Henrietta won't mind, I know. As a matter of fact, I think she'll be glad. She hardly knows what to do with me. I'm frightfully in her way, poor old dear. Yes, take me with you if you will. I should like it above all things."

It had been a hot day, and even now that the sun was down the August heat lay still and heavy about them where they sat on the terrace, but Béatrix Buchanan gave a sudden little shiver, drawing her shoulders together as if she felt cold.

"The air is chill here," she said, quaintly. "I shudder in it. Perhaps, dear, the sun will shine brighter on the other side of the sea."

IV

IN SEARCH OF SUNSHINE

THEY sailed from New York within the fortnight; for Béatrix Buchanan, once her mind had been made up, seemed ridden by a fever of restlessness and impatience. She could not wait to be gone.

"I cannot breathe here," she said again and again. "I want to be off. I want to have blue sea round me. I want to wake up each morning and say, 'America is three hundred and fifty miles farther away from me than it was four-and-twenty hours ago.' I tell you I cannot breathe here."

There was much to be done before the departure, but she hurried through with such duties as could not absolutely be neglected. Lesser things she left quite undone or consigned to the hands of others. She closed the Lodge, leaving there only the family of the head-gardener by way of caretakers, and the few men who were still busy with watching for the improbable reappearance of Herbert Buchanan she left to the direction of a certain elderly and very faithful lawyer in whose hands lay her own property and affairs. It was this man who, upon the death, some eighteen months before this, of Béatrix's father, had taken in charge that gentleman's very badly involved estate, and, to every one's surprise, had managed to evolve from what had been considered imminent bankruptcy

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a respectable fortune for the sole heir. As a result, Béatrix, who had expected nothing at all, found herself endowed with an assured income which, though by no means vast as American incomes go, was more than enough to maintain her, if ever she should come to depend upon it, in luxurious comfort. When she had first learned of this windfall the thing evoked in her no more than a bitter amusement, since she had at that time no prospect of ever having need of the money. Buchanan was not illiberal. She had but one thought. If this had come a few months before, she need not have married, for what old Arabella Crowley had said to Stambolof about the marriage was sober truth. The girl's father had as nearly sold her to Buchanan as a man well may nowadays. It is small wonder that the sudden stroke of good-fortune found no gratitude in her. She could have cursed it. But now, at this juncture, the curse was turned to blessings.

"I want you," she said, to the lawyer, "to establish an account for me with some London or Paris bank upon which I can draw at will. I mean to use my own money entirely."

She wrote a letter to Harry Faring, who was still in the Adirondacks. And this is what she wrote:

"I am sailing for Europe, Harry, on September 8th, and I am taking Alianor Trevor with me. We shall be gone a long time, I think—a year it may be, or even more. I feel that I cannot bear it here any longer. The place maddens me. I want a complete change of scene, and, as far as is possible, of thought, too. That sounds as if I were still in the nervous, rebellious frame of mind in which you left me here two months ago, doesn't it? I'm not, though. I've been thinking a

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great deal, Harry, and, I believe, changing a great deal, too. I'm not rebellious any more. I think I'm—as I said to Alianor the other day—a better woman. Don't laugh. I mean it. I look forward now with no rage or resentment or dismay to the life I must live—and that *is* a change, you know.

“All this is, I fancy, by way of leading up to something which is difficult to say. However, *tout court*, it's this: I want to set you quite free. You said something long ago, while you were here, about ‘never deserting the colors you'd enlisted under.’ The colors are lowered, Harry; the army's disbanded, and you're free. Look; the thing is like this: I will not dodge or evade the truth. We two people love each other very dearly. I admit that, and I am proud of it. *But* here am I, a woman bound—as I said to you that day in the Japanese pavilion—by a chain, and the other end of my chain is lost in the dark. So our love is hopeless—oh, entirely hopeless! But because it still exists we mustn't, for both our sakes, see each other or be near each other. It would be too hard for us. That is, in fact, why I am going away, and it is also why I do not want you to go on giving up your life to me and to my service. What I *do* want is that you go back to your own chosen work—your exploring and all such—that you begin again to live your own life quite irrespective of me, and that my concerns cease altogether to occupy you. You understand, don't you, Harry? You see now miserable I should be to feel that I had wrecked you, bound you to my chariot wheels, though you and I could never be anything more to each other. You understand, don't you, how glad and proud I shall be to know that you are doing fine things, important things such as you have already done?

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"So I beg you, with all my strength and by the great love I bear you, put me and my troubles and cares aside. Go out and do your own man's work in the world, and let me drag upon you no more. Love me if you must—and I think you will, thank God!—but be free of me.

"So, good-bye, Harry. I shall not see you for a long time, for I don't want you to come to New York when I sail, and I forbid you to follow me. Good-bye. If I thought God would listen I should pray for you daily. Perhaps He will. Anyhow, He'll guard you, I think, because you're strong and good.

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They slipped away very quietly. "I don't want a chattering crowd of people with roses and baskets of fruit," Béatrix said. "Let us tell no one that we're going." And so only Arabella Crowley and the elderly lawyer man, who fidgeted with his eye-glasses and seemed to wonder why he was there, and Alianor Trevor's aunt, a fretful lady in uncomfortable black, were at the pier to see them off. Miss Trevor's aunt brought a large parcel with her in her brougham. It proved to be a new and amazingly ingenious sort of life-preserver, which, when you had strapped it on, not only kept you triumphantly afloat in the worst of weather, but, from unsuspected recesses within its bowels, provided you with meat and drink. The donor apologized to Béatrix Buchanan for not having provided two of these machines. It seemed thoughtless, she said, especially as Mrs. Buchanan was doing so much for dear Ellen, but the thing was so very expensive and one had so many calls upon one's means.

Old Arabella kissed Béatrix very affectionately, and

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her usually copious flow of nonsense seemed to desert her.

"I think you are very wise, dear child, to go away," she said. "I think it is far the best thing you could do, though I shall miss you. Stay a long time and try to amuse yourself. You've had no amusement for years. If anything turns up here—if you're needed, we shall let you know at once. Now go on board. This waiting about is so silly. And don't expect me to stand on the pier-head and wave a handkerchief, because I shall not do it. I'm going to take Mr. Althorpe home with me and give him some tea."

And two hours later, when the steamship slowed down outside Sandy Hook to drop the pilot, and gathered way again, Mrs. Buchanan sank into her deck-chair with a great sigh of relief that was almost a sob.

"There's the last of America, thank Heaven!" she said. "It's shockingly unpatriotic in me, isn't it? But I'm glad, oh, I'm glad to be off! Baby, dear, maybe the sun shines brighter where we're going. It's chill here."

They went first to Naples, meaning to spend some weeks at Sorrento and Capri, but it was very hot in Naples, and so they turned north to Venice. There, by one of those extraordinary chances which bring friends together from opposite ends of the earth, they fell upon Stambolof and, with him, that rather famous cosmopolitan, the old Earl of Strobe, Isabeau de Monsigny's grandfather.

The old Earl took one of his rare and violent fancies to Mrs. Buchanan, and, after a fortnight, insisted upon bearing the whole party off to Château Monsigny, which is near Versailles.

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They spent a month there in company with Lord Strobe and with Lord and Lady Loggan—to give Isabeau her proper but unfamiliar title. And then Béatrix Buchanan and Miss Trevor went to the Engadine for August and a part of September.

But mid-autumn found the two, thanks to Lord Strobe's and Isabeau de Monsigny's efforts, installed in a very beautiful flat in Paris, in the quiet rue de Luxembourg, which borders the westward side of the shady Luxembourg Gardens. And about them there gathered naturally a little circle of intimates, who came, in the course of time, to regard themselves as tea-hour fixtures in the place, and seldom missed a day. Lord Strobe came, and the Loggans—for between Mrs. Buchanan and the beautiful Monsigny heiress had sprung up one of those swift and intimate friendships which often occur among women with no apparent cause, and are afterwards, as circumstances fall, broken off with scarcely a pang—and Stambolof came with regularity, bringing sometimes a friend of his, a young Englishman who had come out of the South African war with a D. S. O. and an injured leg tendon, which did not noticeably lame him, but had rendered him unfit for further military service and had thrown him out of the army into a civilian world where he seemed a bit bewildered and at a loss as to how to occupy himself. And, like the others, this young man—his name was Braithwaite—soon formed a habit of dropping in at the rue de Luxembourg without waiting for Stambolof to bring him, and there showed a truly soldierly aptitude for manœuvring little Alianor Trevor into a corner and extracting sympathy from that soft-hearted lady over his injured leg.

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So in this quiet fashion the winter wore on and spring came, but their events must not be set down here, because, although this is the story of Béatrix Buchanan and of certain of those whose lives were for a time involved in hers, it is rather of the things which happened afterwards that the chronicle must concern itself—the bigger and stranger things. This year abroad was a year of waiting.

Still, the very waiting, the quiet, pleasant life among congenial friends, the absence of anything dramatic or tragic, all these influences had their value as affecting Mrs. Buchanan's mind. It is the real growth of character in her which must be established here, the growth out of a bewildered, a resentful, a terror-haunted, and, finally, an exhausted girl into a woman whose calm soul looked upon life from a hill-top, who knew at last that happiness is not just freedom from care, who weighed her motives and her actions with serenity, and, in the end, was able to choose the way she should go, not perhaps wisely or very righteously, but at least with a mind unclouded by fear or bewilderment, knowing the cost and the reward.

In August, Mrs. Buchanan and Alianor Trevor went to Lord Strope's Breton castle near Audierne, but mid-September brought them once more back to Paris and to the apartment in the rue de Luxembourg.

Just then, before they had fairly settled themselves, Béatrix had a letter from Harry Faring. He was in London, he said, just landed from Buenos Ayres. She had known that he was in South America, somewhere on the upper Orinoco with an exploring party, but this was all she knew, for they did not write to each other. And he asked, without any expression

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of tenderness or such—rather formally, indeed—if he might come over to Paris and see her.

She had been for a long time quiet and sheltered, distracted by pleasant occupation from too much brooding. And, with her newly acquired, calm strength, she had been successful in forcing out of her thoughts Harry Faring and what he meant to her, as well as the tragedy which had driven her from her home. Unconsciously, she had connected them in her mind—Faring and the events which had nearly wrecked her—and for this reason, perhaps, it had been the easier to keep her thoughts from him.

But now, with his short, formally worded letter shaking in her hand, she felt a sudden overwhelming flood of emotion which amazed and frightened her. It was her first experience with the truth that a great thing may for a long time—even years—lie quite dormant in a man's or a woman's mind, subconscious, as it were, and at last, through some trivial accident, burst forth in all its old, tremendous strength. She sat locked in her own room, bewildered and shaken, for an hour or more.

Then she began to write letters to Faring. She wrote six, all very different and most of them absurd. Some told him to come and some begged him, as he loved her, to stay away. Towards evening she tore them all up, and sent a servant out to the nearest *bureau de poste* with a telegram.

It was a message of one word, and said, "Come."

He came by that night's train, reaching Paris at five in the morning, but it was not until afternoon, a little before the formal hour, that he presented himself.

Béatrix had rehearsed with elaboration and care

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just how she was to meet him and what she was to say, for she was still very much disturbed and a bit frightened—by no means sure of herself. According to rehearsals she was to be exceedingly friendly—just that. She was to profess a great interest in what he had been doing during this past year, and she was to be voluble over her own wanderings. By the time they had finished with these topics other callers were sure to have dropped in, and the situation would, from that point, take care of itself.

But when, as she sat waiting and playing with some book—she never knew what book—in the long front salon which overlooked the gardens, he was at last announced—"Monsieur Varang," the servant had it—her knees gave suddenly under her when she tried to rise, and she began a little, nervous, foolish laugh of sheer hysteria over the absurd sound of the name as rendered by a French tongue. Faring came quickly into the room, and somehow she got to her feet to meet him. The oft-rehearsed lines went quite from her mind, and she found herself saying only:

"How—thin you are, Harry! Oh, how thin you are!" Indeed, he was alarmingly thin, and looked worn and ill. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes were like the eyes of a man who has suffered a long illness. They seemed much deeper set than usual, and they burned sombrely from their sockets. He was tanned and weather-beaten almost to the color of leather, but under this tan a grayish pallor of ill-health took the place of the blood's rich stain.

"Only a touch of fever," he said, and the woman thought that his voice went with his altered face, that it was tired and slack. "I had a fairly bad time of it a couple of months ago," he said, "just as we were

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finishing, luckily, but the sea voyage across from Buenos Ayres set me almost right again. I shall be fit as ever in a few weeks. You are looking amazingly well," he said, conventionally. "I've never seen you look so well."

Mrs. Buchanan dropped into her chair and began pushing the things about on the tea-table beside her. She might well have broken them, for her eyes were blind.

"Oh, I!" she said, in the same tone of polite convention—"I'm well. Yes, of course. I'm positively sleek. I'm growing fat and matronly. It's quite ridiculous. You see—I've had such a quiet, lazy, peaceful time of it. Just like a cow at pasture, I might say, if that weren't quite too insulting to my friends. Did you know that Alianor Trevor was here with me? And Stambolof is here a great deal, and heaps of others who've taken us under their wings."

"Yes, yes," he said, looking down between his clasped hands at the pattern of the rug. "Yes, to be sure."

"Are you going to—stay abroad another year?" he asked, presently, when she did not speak.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "I suppose so. There's—nothing really to take me back to America. I've so few friends there. Aunt Arabella Crowley is the only one who truly counts. Dear old Aunt Arabella! She writes to me quite regularly once every fortnight and tells me all the scandal. I want to see her, of course; but there's almost no one else. And," she said, after a moment, looking away—"and no—news."

"Yes, I know," said Faring.

Then those blindly groping hands of hers did at last

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push off one of the things on the tea-table—a silver strainer it was — so that it dropped to the floor. Béatrix and Faring stooped for it at the same instant, and on the floor their hands touched. It was like an electrical contact between two charged wires. The woman began to tremble, and for a moment she had not the strength to raise herself.

“Harry, Harry, Harry!” she said, in a shaking whisper. Young Faring drew a swift gasp which was like a sob, and his face went white.

What might have come of their sudden loss of control no one can say, for at that moment Alianor Trevor came into the room, and almost immediately after Stambolof was announced.

V

ARABELLA SUMMONS

THE correlation of striking events in the life of any individual is too familiar and too widely recognized to excite amazement. There is some mysterious law by which such events come to us grouped instead of singly, and we all recognize this law and express no criticism upon it. It is only when we come upon its workings in what is called fiction or in the drama that we wag a scornful head and talk wisely about "twisting nature to make a story," about "nonsensical melodrama," and about "things that never would have occurred in such a fashion." The old folk-sayings, "It never rains but it pours" and "Misfortunes never come singly," are not foolish or random phrases—they are proverbial recognitions of the working of this law.

And this same law, it would seem, must be held responsible for the bringing together of Harry Faring's visit to Paris, with its consequent effect upon Mrs. Buchanan; its setting at naught, at least for the hour, of all her long year of repression and peacefulness; and the coming of a message from far away, which, infinitely more than the sight of the man she loved, uprooted her from her new world and thrust her, trembling, face to face with Fate.

Faring and Stambolof had risen to go. They had

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made their adieux and had turned towards the door of the salon when a servant entered with a telegram. Mrs. Buchanan said:

"Oh, just a moment. We must arrange about the theatre. May I read this despatch?" She tore open the flimsy envelope, and Alianor Trevor said: "Oh, it's not a *petit bleu*. The paper is white. It must be a cablegram."

Then Mrs. Buchanan sat down. After a moment she said, very low:

"Harry, Harry!" And Faring went quickly across the room to her. But first he said something to Stambolof, and the Russian beckoned little Miss Trevor out of the room to the iron balcony which ran the length of the house outside the long windows. Faring took the crumpled white paper from the woman's slack hand and read it swiftly.

It was a short despatch, and it was signed by Arabella Crowley. It said:

"Body found resembling Herbert. Your identification necessary. Will preserve. Can you come to New York immediately?"

Mrs. Buchanan sat in her chair looking dully before her. Her hands picked and pulled at the lace handkerchief in her lap, but her face was absolutely without expression. Faring looked at her, and went quickly across the room to a little table whereon stood several small liqueur decanters and glasses. He poured a glass of brandy and brought it back to the woman, who sat staring.

"Drink this," he said. "Drink it at once—all of it." He spoke sharply, in an old, well-remembered tone, the tone of the man who directs a situation. He left the glass in her hand and stood for a moment

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thinking. It was good to see how his lassitude and illness, almost his pallor of cheek, had dropped from him like a cast-off garment.

There was another, larger table in a corner, with books and magazines and daily papers. He searched among these, and took up the day's edition of the *Paris New York Herald*. He turned to the shipping news.

"To-day is—Thursday," he said. "Thursday, the sixteenth. Friday? No, nothing fast on Friday. Saturday, September the eighteenth. French and American. The *St. Louis* will do it." He turned back into the room.

"Betty," he said, "the *St. Louis*, of the American Line, sails from Cherbourg on Saturday. That is the day after to-morrow. You must be ready for the special steamer-train which leaves the Gare St. Lazare at nine-twenty in the morning. I will see to the tickets and all that, and Stambolof will look after your affairs here. All you must do is to be ready with your luggage at half-past eight on Saturday morning. Do you understand?"

Mrs. Buchanan nodded slowly. "Yes, yes," she said, "I understand." But she seemed in a daze. She listened to him like a little child who is told what it must do at a certain time. Her eyes were bewildered like a child's eyes, and trusting. After a moment she said:

"You—you'll go with me, Harry?"

"Yes, yes; of course," said Faring. And then he frowned and stood looking down thoughtfully at the woman who sat before him.

"Wait a moment," he said, and went back to the *Herald* and its shipping news.

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"*Lucania*, from Liverpool, Saturday," he said to himself. "Yes. Better," and again turned to Mrs. Buchanan.

"No, Betty," he said, "I sha'n't go with you."

She cried out at that, but he held up his hand to stop her.

"Wait. Let me explain," said he. "I shall cross the Channel to-morrow, after I've made your arrangements for you, and take the *Lucania* from Liverpool, which sails on the same day as your ship. I shall probably be in New York at least a few hours before you. It—when you've had time to think it over you will see that it's better so—better that I shouldn't go with you. You'll understand. Now I want a word with Stambolof."

He went out upon the iron balcony where Stambolof and Alianor Trevor were waiting, and told them very briefly what the message had been and what he meant to do. Miss Trevor said at once that she would return to America with Béatrix, and promised to see to it that they were ready for the steamer-train on Saturday morning. Then Faring and Stambolof went away together to make the necessary arrangements, and left the two women alone.

When they had gone Béatrix Buchanan seemed at last to waken from her stupor. The younger woman had dropped down beside her, perching upon the arm of her chair, and had drawn the still head against her breast, kissing it and stroking it in the tender way women have, and for a moment Mrs. Buchanan let it rest there. Then she freed herself gently and rose to her feet. She drew a great, deep breath, and was seemingly herself once more.

"There will be a great deal to do, dearest," she said.

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"We must make our plans. We must, first of all, write to a number of people—to the Earl and to Isabeau and—oh yes, to Lady Sibyl Eversley. The Eversleys were coming over next week, were they not? There is so little time that we probably shall see none of them at all, save, possibly, Lord Strope, to-morrow." Her eyes fell upon the thin, crumpled paper of the telegram pasted with its narrow, typed strips of message, and she took it again into her hand and slowly read it through.

"Oh, baby," she said, at the end, "what shall we find? What's to come of this journey of ours, I wonder?" And then, as she stood there beside the table, wide-eyed and thoughtful, suddenly a crimson flush came up over her throat and face, and she gave a little cry. It was as if it had only then come into her mind what this journey's end might mean—indeed, probably would mean—the freedom she had so passionately longed for—freedom and something else.

She laid her two hands over her face and moved blindly, stumblingly across the room to one of the windows. And she stepped out on the balcony and stood there for a long time, her hands still over her face.

For a few moments little Alianor Trevor watched and waited. Then, as the elder woman showed no sign of stirring, she went quietly out of the room to her own chamber. There she locked the door and laid herself upon the white bed, face downward, and began to weep very bitterly.

VI

A LAD'S LOVE—AND A VERY TIRED OLD MAN

THROUGH the next day, Friday, the two were very busy indeed with packing and letter-writing, and with the thousand various things which must be done when a household is being broken up in the space of twenty-four hours. Lord Strobe and Lord and Lady Loggan looked in during the course of the afternoon, having motored from Monsigny on receipt of the news of the impending departure.

The old Earl was much cast down and, as always when disappointed, in a bad temper.

"I dare say I shall never see you again," he said, crossly, to Béatrix. "It is my usual fortune. I become very intimate with some one, and then that some one is suddenly whisked to the opposite end of the earth. It has happened a score of times, and I am too old to take such things patiently. No, I dare say I shall never see you again. I shall probably die one of these days. I ought to have died long ago." Mrs. Buchanan laughed at him.

"That is nonsense," said she. "You will live forever, sir. I cannot imagine you dying or even growing feeble. Look at yourself in that glass yonder! Do you look like 'dying one of these days'?" The old gentleman gave a grim, sour smile, but he was not to be comforted, and was finally borne off by the

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Loggans, still growling and complaining that this world was an uninhabitable place where nothing pleased him.

Stambolof and Harry Faring dined at the flat, and Stambolof stayed on afterwards, but Faring had to leave almost immediately after dinner in order to take the night train for London and Liverpool.

When he had gone Mrs. Buchanan tried to leave the Russian and Miss Trevor together for a final hour, but Stambolof, blind as ever, insisted upon talking over the affairs which they were leaving in his hands to settle and close up, and so her kindly plan was defeated.

Late in the evening young Braithwaite appeared, white and panic-stricken over the news which had just reached him.

"I say, it—it can't be true!" he pleaded before Alianor Trevor. "You're not seriously going away out to America on a day's notice?"

"I'm afraid it's true," she said. "Yes, I'm afraid we're going." And, because she liked the lad very much indeed, and knew he was entirely discreet, and because of the honest distress which she could not fail to see in his eyes, she told him why they were going and what hung upon their arrival in America.

"Yes, I see," he said at the end. "Oh yes, of course, you've got to go. But, hang it, it's no easier for me, is it? What's going to become of me, I should like to know?"

"Oh, I expect you'll just go on," said the girl, "just as always, won't you?" The hurt in the lad's eyes faced her out. She had to look away.

"You know better than that," he said. "I can't just go on any more. You've settled that."

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Miss Trevor shook her head. "Have I?" she said, gently. "I haven't settled anything."

"You've settled it without trying," said the boy. "Settled it against your will, if you like. I can't go on rotting about as I used to do. I'm—too hard hit for that—altogether too hard hit. *You* know, I think."

"Oh!" said little Alianor Trevor. "Oh, I'm sorry! I'm sorrier than I ever was before in all my life. I—haven't wanted to hurt you. Truly, truly! You've got to believe me."

The lad who had fought in South Africa squared his shoulders. "I suppose," he said, slowly, looking at the floor—"I suppose you—mean by that that there's no chance for me—no chance for me. What? I s'pose I've been a—silly ass all this while. I thought—I—you see, I hoped. A chap does, you know. I couldn't help hopin'. I didn't dare give up hope because I—it meant such a jolly lot to me!"

"I'm sorry," said the girl, helplessly, and she meant it with all sincerity. Safe in her dim, half-lighted corner the tears came to her eyes, and one rolled down her cheek, and Braithwaite watched it and gripped his hands together very hard.

"I—liked you so," she said. "I like you now, so very, very much! That's why I've let you—see so much of me. It may be that I—might have been able to go—to go further if—I can't tell," she said. "I mustn't say any more. I—there's something must keep me from loving you. Please believe me."

"There's somebody else?" said the lad. "There's some other man?"

She was not looking at him. She was looking down towards the far end of the room where Mrs. Buchanan

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sat with Boris Stambolof, and he had never seen her eyes just like that. Something stabbed him deeply—through and through.

"Oh, my God!" said young Braithwaite, in a whisper. "Oh, my God!—Stambolof! Stambolof!"

The girl turned to him with a shiver.

"What do you mean?" she said, but her face flushed to the hair and went white again, and those eyes that he had never before seen told their unhappy tale too clearly.

"And," said she, after a long time when he had sat staring miserably into her face—"and," she said, very low, "why—not?"

"He's—a dead man!" said the boy, and Alianor Trevor shivered again. "His heart and soul are dead—long since," he said.

"I know," she whispered. "And it makes—no difference. I—ask nothing of him—expect nothing. I love him," she said. "I cannot help it. I would not help it if I could. My heart is full of him, and—I cannot love any one else." She fell into a little staring silence. Then:

"I am sorry to have hurt you," she said. "You will never know how sorry I am. If it were not for—if things were different I think I should have—loved you. You are the sort of man a girl would love and be proud of. Will you try to forgive me? I mean for having let you—love me. I didn't mean to. I was unhappy, and you—you were kind and sweet to me, and—I didn't realize. Will you try to forgive me—after a while?"

A great flush spread up over young Braithwaite's face, and something that was like a sob broke from him.

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"Forgive you?" he cried, under his breath. "Have I anything to forgive you? If I've been a stupid, blind ass, is that any of your fault? I'm—I tell you I'm glad I—love you. I'm proud of it. There's nobody else in the world for me, and, by Heaven, there never will be! I don't mean to give up hoping," he said. "One day you may find that you can—that you can—care. I don't ask you to promise anything. I'm just going to wait and—wait and hope. You can't prevent me."

"No," she said, sadly. "I can't prevent you, but I'm very sorry, because I cannot feel that there is any hope or will be any."

"Oh," she cried, "I have brought you nothing but pain and grief! I wish I might give you something to make up for them, but I have nothing to give."

"I can wait," said he. "I'm very good at waiting."

The girl put out a hand and touched his cheek with the finger-tips—touched his lips. It was an odd little caress.

"You'd—much best not wait," she whispered. "You'd much best forget me."

"When I forget you," said young Braithwaite, soberly, "it will be because I've been a very long time dead."

Stambolof's farewell was much briefer, but she never forgot it so long as she lived. He had gone to the station with the two women the next morning, and had seen to their luggage, and put them in their reserved compartment, and at the last, when the guards were running along the platform slamming the doors of the carriages and crying:

"En voiture, m'sieurs et dames! En voiture!" he

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stood an instant bareheaded by the compartment window, and he bent over Alianor Trevor's hand and kissed it with his old-fashioned courtesy.

"Good-bye, mademoiselle," he said. "You have been a rose in a desert to a very tired old man. Good-bye!"

VII

FOUND DEAD

THIS time there were no blue skies or summer seas to make the voyage a delight. The equinoctial gales were abroad upon the north Atlantic, and the *St. Louis* fought her way through them from port to port.

Oddly enough, Béatrix Buchanan seemed to find something in this blustering clamor of the elements which was to her liking, for Miss Trevor says that she would make her way out upon the drenched and deserted deck to the weather-side of the ship, and there, clinging with all her strength to the rail, would stand for hours together, wind, rain, and spray driving upon her and forcing the very breath she drew back into her throat. And when her endurance was at last gone she would creep exhausted and streaming to her cabin and fall into a stupor of sleep. Miss Trevor says that she was reminded of those days, long past, at Buchanan Lodge when Béatrix would come in, day after day, wind-blown, dishevelled, and fagged from her long, lonely vigil on the cliffs or by the sea. Later, it seems that she obtained a quantity of sulphonal from the ship's surgeon, and with this drugged herself into sleep both night and day.

She spoke little, Miss Trevor says, but when she did break her silence it was to express fear and foreboding over what awaited her in New York.

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"This storm is portentous," she said once. "Do you remember, baby, that when we left America we had still weather—heavenly weather, of smooth seas and cloudless skies? That was because we were going into sunshine and peace. I cannot help thinking that these angry gales are taking us both to—to something like themselves—back into storm and stress once more. Baby, dear, I'm afraid; I'm afraid!"

Miss Trevor says that she tried to argue with her. She says she pointed out the fact that their voyage could have but one of two results. Either this dead man would prove to be Herbert Buchanan, in which case, freedom—absolute freedom and that which freedom would bring—or it would not be Buchanan, in which case they had but to recross the Atlantic, and again take up their pleasant, peaceful life in Paris with good friends about them. The whole thing was very simple, she urged, and there was nothing in it, either way it should turn out, to bring unhappiness or despair.

But Béatrix was in no state of mind for reason. Argument made, it seemed, absolutely no impression upon her. She only shook her head, and repeated:

"I'm afraid, baby, afraid." Which brought little Miss Trevor to the point of despairing exasperation.

And once she said something which greatly puzzled the girl, since it seemed to her to have nothing whatever to do with the matter. They had been talking in the above vein, and Mrs. Buchanan, after a little frowning silence, said:

"Do you know, child, I sometimes believe I have singular depths of badness in me. I believe that my moral sense lacks something. It isn't as strong, somehow, as other people's. If I had been born in another

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class I expect I should have stolen things without feeling that it was very wrong. I wonder why that is!"

Miss Trevor pressed her to explain, but she would say no more. It would seem that her speech must have been the conclusion of some long course of introspective thought, but she refused to explain what she meant or what it had to do with their going to America to identify the body of Herbert Buchanan.

They arrived in New York Harbor on Sunday morning, for the gales had considerably delayed them. Old Arabella Crowley came down the bay on the boat of the customs officials and boarded the ship at Quarantine. She was entirely unexpected, and Mrs. Buchanan was not on deck to greet her, but Alianor Trevor was there to witness the inspiring sight of a large, elderly lady of great dignity being pushed and hauled up a sea-ladder to an accompaniment of cheers from the steerage-passengers.

Old Arabella kissed Miss Trevor very warmly, and told her how well she was looking. She asked for Béatrix, and the girl took her below to the cabin where Mrs. Buchanan was superintending the packing of her bags. Béatrix gave a little cry when she saw the old woman in the doorway, and ran to her. But after the first few words of greeting she stood away, looking very anxiously into Mrs. Crowley's face.

"Is it—Herbert, Aunt Arabella?" she asked, in a whisper.

"I think so, my dear," said old Arabella. "Every one thinks so, but we cannot be certain without your word. The servants of the Lodge are scattered since you closed the place, and we have been able to find only one or two whose opinion was worth anything.

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The valet—Herbert's valet—has gone to England, and cannot be traced. There is one point which only you can settle. It all depends upon one point." Mrs. Crowley looked towards the maid, who was busy with her mistress's toilet things, and Béatrix sent the woman away. Little Miss Trevor also made some excuse and left the cabin, so that the two were alone.

"The—body," said old Arabella, "was found in the water, my dear, and—well, it is rather unpleasant to speak of, but it had been in the water a long time, you understand, so that identification is not so easy as one might think. But it looks very like Herbert, very like indeed. There is, however, one point, as I said before, which only you can settle. The body—this man whose body has been found—had an odd and conspicuous scar on the inside of one arm—"

Mrs. Buchanan cried out sharply, and she began to tremble, and after a moment to sob.

"The—right arm," she said. "The right arm."

"Yes, dearest," said Arabella Crowley, "the right arm." And for a moment her own voice was a bit unsteady, so that she paused before going on.

"It must be he," she said at last. "That proves it—practically. Of course, you will have to—see for yourself. They will insist upon that I expect. I am sorry. It will be very trying. But now there can be no doubt that it is he." She hesitated, and looked doubtfully towards the younger woman as if she did not quite know what to say further—whether to express the satisfaction she really felt or the sorrow which convention dictated. But Béatrix Buchanan, glancing up, caught the look and smiled faintly back at her.

"Oh, no pretence of woe, Aunt Arabella, please,"

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she said, and the fit of nervous shivering and of sobbing had passed all in a moment, leaving her calm. "Let us not pretend what we don't feel," she said. "I am glad, frankly. I didn't love him, as you know, and I am glad to have all this dreadful strain over with. It sets me free, and before I was most cruelly bound. Oh yes, I am glad."

Then she asked if Harry Faring had arrived—he had, the night before—and when she would have to go through the ordeal which was before her, what arrangements had been made, and all such practical matters.

"Everything is arranged," Mrs. Crowley said. "As soon as the ship is berthed we will drive to the—to where it is. They will be waiting for us, your lawyer-man and the others. It will take only a few moments. Then we can go home. You're coming to me, of course, in Gramercy Park. Harry Faring will be there—at the house. He thought it would be best not to seem to be engaged in the thing at all, though he has been busy all this morning making the arrangements. For a man," said old Arabella, handsomely, "he has great tact and thoughtfulness, Harry has."

Béatrix Buchanan smiled softly to herself.

"He has all that a man should have," she said, under her breath. "He is all that a man should be. He's tender and strong and faithful and true, Aunt Arabella. I think there are no other men like him in this world. I should like him to know how good I think he is."

Old Arabella sniffed.

"I dare say he knows as much about it as is good for him," she said. "Never you praise a man, my dear! It spoils 'em. I know. They become quite in-

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sufferable. Discipline!—that's what men need. They don't get half enough of it."

Then Mrs. Buchanan's maid came again to the door, and the two women went up on deck to allow her to finish her work.

At the pier the elderly lawyer-man was waiting. He had procured a ticket permitting him to go inside the customs line, and greeted Mrs. Buchanan at the foot of the gangway. He was very nervous and excited, and he frisked about in an anxious fashion, saying over and over again:

"Now we must be perfectly calm—perfectly calm."

Then the three—Mrs. Crowley, Béatrix, and the lawyer-man—went at once to a carriage, which was waiting for them, and drove away, leaving Alianor Trevor and the maids and one of Mrs. Crowley's men to pass the luggage through the customs and follow.

It was a wet, chill day, with lowering skies and a fine, driving rain—a November day come before its time. Béatrix sat back in the brougham and closed her eyes, and old Arabella noted that she was slowly growing paler, and that her hands were again nervous and unquiet. The lawyer made a fine effort to manufacture cheerful conversation, but Mrs. Buchanan did not answer or seem to hear him at all, and presently old Arabella gave him a warning nod, and he subsided with a final, "Quite so. Quite so."

It seemed to Mrs. Buchanan that they drove for hours—in fact, it was not above twenty minutes or thereabouts—and after a time she sat up and leaned forward to look through the rain-splashed window.

"We are going a very long distance," she said, in a fretful tone. "Where are we? I don't recognize the neighborhood at all." And just then they drew up to

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the curb, and a man who had been standing in a doorway came out and opened the carriage before the footman was down from his seat.

The man said: "Oh, it's you, is it? We was afraid you wouldn't be coming till afternoon. Come right along in."

There was a little knot of men in the room which they entered, and the men all turned and stared curiously at the new-comers. One of them whispered something, nodding towards Béatrix Buchanan, and two or three of the others took off their hats.

"We're all ready for you," said the man who had come out to the carriage. "Make a light in beyond there, Bill." And one of the group said, "It's made already."

Then the man who seemed to be in authority looked towards Béatrix Buchanan.

"Shall we—shall I go in with you?" asked old Arabella. Mrs. Buchanan shook her head dumbly.

"Better—alone," she said, after a moment. It seemed to be difficult for her to speak. She followed the man in charge, who had gone towards a door at the back of the room.

"Right in this way, ma'am," he said, and she followed him through what seemed to be a tiny ante-chamber, and thence, upon the opening of a door, into a farther room whose atmosphere smote her in the face with an almost palpable chill, for the temperature was below freezing. There seemed to be no windows, and the only light came from two flaring gas-jets which dropped from the centre of the ceiling on a simple and unornamented T. Under them, stretched upon a plain trestle, rather like an operating-table

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which she had once seen, something long and still lay covered by a cloth.

The man in charge tiptoed across to the thing under those flaring gaslights, and Mrs. Buchanan wondered dully why he walked so. She decided that it was out of respect for her rather than for the dead, since his calling must long since have robbed him of that. He turned back the cloth from the face of the dead man and from the right arm, which lay out at a slight angle from the side.

"Careful now," he said, anxiously. "Don't you be afraid. There isn't nothing to be afraid of." He half held out his hands as if he expected Mrs. Buchanan to fall in a faint. Probably he had had unpleasant experiences with women who came there to identify friend or relation.

But this woman showed no sign of fainting. She moved up beside him, he said afterwards, with no evidence of fear or even of reluctance. And she looked down at the sorry thing which lay there. But the sight must, after all, have been too much for her, for as she looked she gave a sudden scream, not very loud, and put her hands up over her face. Then, after a moment, she asked him, whispering, if he would leave her alone for a little. He wondered at that, but women often asked queer things of him, and so, without comment, he went out, first fetching a chair from the other end of the room and setting it near her. He said that as he closed the door behind him Mrs. Buchanan was just sinking back into this chair, and he said she still held her hands over her face.

They left her alone with the dead man in that chill place for, it may have been, four or five minutes. Then Mrs. Crowley went to the door and knocked

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upon it. The elderly lawyer stood behind her. There was no answer, and so she knocked again, and finally opened the door. Béatrix sat where the keeper had left her. Her arms had dropped to her sides, and hung there with the fingers nearly reaching the floor. Her eyes stared, unwinking, at the thing which lay so long and still under the yellow gaslight.

When Mrs. Crowley called out to her from the doorway, she rose very slowly. Once on her feet, she swayed as if she would fall, and put out a hand to save herself. But when the hand nearly touched the thing on the trestle she caught it swiftly back and gave a cry under her breath. The other two came forward into the room, and Mrs. Buchanan looked towards the lawyer. She seemed not to see old Arabella.

"It is—Herbert Buchanan," she said, in a dry voice. And she repeated it: "It is Herbert—Buchanan."

Then she let them lead her out of the place and to the carriage which was waiting at the curb.

VIII

BEFORE PARADISE GATES COMETH PURGATORY

IT was about a week after this that young Faring, following his daily habit, turned into Gramercy Park and went up the steps of Arabella Crowley's old-fashioned house which stood at the foot of Lexington Avenue. The footman at the door said that Mrs. Crowley was in the drawing-room. He did not say that Mrs. Buchanan was there also, and Faring wondered why, for he knew that she must be expecting him at this hour. There were, however, so many simple and perfectly good reasons why she might not be below-stairs or even in the house at just this moment that, as he found himself wondering, he gave a short laugh and shook his head at his eagerness. It was rather like a boy, he thought, and he was no longer a boy in any way, but he was not in the least ashamed of being boyishly eager to see the woman he loved or boyishly disappointed if he was made to wait. The first sight of her after he had been away for twenty-four hours, or even for a much shorter time, always made his heart give a quick little leap and made it race for a few seconds. Also a sudden flush would come up over his cheeks and then die away. Possibly all this was because he had never been what is called a "lady's man," and so had preserved a certain unusual shyness and a certain rare

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sensitiveness to that charm which a woman, and in particular the woman one loves, spreads always about her like a palpable vapor. More probably it was because the man's whole fine, simple nature was so charged with the great love he bore for Béatrix Buchanan that it was a sort of actual shock to come into her presence—a constantly repeated thrill which never grew less or turned commonplace or showed signs of cheapening itself to him.

In the big, square drawing-room where the blinds were drawn down to shut out the sunshine, Arabella Crowley laid down a book which she had been reading, and, without rising, held out her hand.

"Ah, it's you, Harry!" she said. "You'll hate and despise me, for I'm the bearer of evil tidings. Who was it used to kill bearers of evil tidings? I once had a picture about it. The bearers were all lying about the floor in an untidy heap, and the person who had been so annoyed by them was lying on an inartistic couch thing with a sword in his hand waiting for more tidings. A most depressing picture, I assure you. What? The tidings? Oh, she's gone! Béatrix has gone away."

Young Faring halted suddenly in the middle of the room.

"What do you—mean?" he said, in a still voice.

"Gone away," repeated Arabella, crossly. And then, as he stood staring, she broke out in a half-angry laugh. "My good man," she protested, "do not stand there with that stricken-to-the-heart expression! There's nothing terrible in it. She's gone away for a few months, for decency's sake, I take it. You must remember that she's a newly made widow. I expect she's running away from you, if you should ask me.

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I expect you've been making love to her, and it's really not decent. Oh, bother the man!—Here!" cried old Arabella, in a tone of exasperation. "Here! She's left you a letter. You may read it now, if you like. I must talk to Huggins. There are people coming for dinner, and I have not even seen the menu. Read your letter, lad! I shall be back in ten minutes." She labored out of the room a bit stiffly, for the autumn had brought on her rheumatism, but in the doorway she turned.

"If you want my opinion of this last whim of Béatrix Buchanan's," she said, "I think it is too absurd to be patient over. Why, in Heaven's name, she could not have been contented to stay on here through the winter, in peace and comfort with me, I cannot imagine. I'm very much out of temper with her. I told her so when she went this morning. Was she impressed? No. She laughed at me, and kissed me on the tip of the nose. I wash my hands of her." Old Arabella moved away, grumbling volubly to herself, and Faring tore open the envelope of his letter.

"Dearest," said Beatrix Buchanan. That "dearest" sprang at him from the white paper with the same little, thrilling shock he was wont to take from the first sight of her face after an absence. "I'm running away from you for a little while," she said. "I'm always running away from you. You will be thinking that it's a habit I've got. It isn't, though. This is why I am going: I cannot bear to stay where you are, to see you every day, and remain on the terms which are decent and necessary for us just now. It is too difficult for both of us, Harry. So I'm fleeing you between two days. I had made

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up my mind about it before I saw you yesterday, but I said nothing, because I hadn't the courage. I'm a frightful coward, you know. Truly I am. I was afraid that you would beg me to stay, and I knew that if you did I should stay on. And it really won't do. So I'm going away where you can't find me. Even Aunt Arabella doesn't know where I'm to be. Only my lawyer-man knows, and he won't tell. So, Harry, do not try to find me. Wait a little time—only a few months. What are a few months out of a lifetime? This is the eighth of October. Six months from to-day it will be the eighth of April. On that day I shall let you know where I am, and then—then, if you want to, you may come to me. You see, I'm still giving you your freedom. I say, 'You may come if you want to,' not just 'come!' Ah, that's very silly of me!—a silly, pretending make-belief. For I know you don't want your freedom any more than I want mine. I know that you will be counting the days just as I shall count them, and that you'll be very bitter at them because they go so slowly. We needn't pretend to each other, need we, Harry? We've already said too much for that. We know each other's hearts too well. Do we? Do we, though? Ah, well, as well as is good for us, I expect.

"That's all I need say, I suppose. In April I shall write to you, and you will come. Till then it's waiting. Oh, Harry, the waiting will be long for me as well as for you. You must believe that.

"Go and see Alianor Trevor sometimes. The poor child is not very happy, and she will be glad to have you to cheer her up. She says she is not going out at all this winter. I could never tell you what a comfort she was to me at the Lodge and abroad.

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"Good-bye, Harry! Don't call me names for all this—like Aunt Arabella, the blessed old termagant! Truly, it's the only thing to do.

"BÉATRIX."

Mrs. Crowley, after what she considered a discreet interval, returned to the drawing-room. But the man was still bent over his letter.

"You've had time to read that twice over," she said, belligerently.

"I have read it twice," said young Faring. "I'm reading it again."

The old woman gave a short laugh of mingled tenderness and scorn.

"Of such inestimable value is a scrap of white paper scrawled with ink!" said she.

"Béatrix," said the man, without emotion, "refers to you as termagant—a 'blessed old termagant.'"

"Hal!" said Mrs. Crowley, fiercely. "Does she, though?" she said.

"She does," said Mr. Faring. "Of course," he admitted, handsomely, "she may be wrong."

"She is," said the old woman, as one who knows.

"'Les absents,'" quoted Mr. Faring, "'ont toujours tort.'"

"Is that your own?" she demanded.

"Well, not altogether," he smiled. "Still, it doesn't matter. It's just as untrue as if I had made it. So Béatrix has fled again? Aunt Arabella, will you be a bridesmaid for us on the ninth of next April?"

"I will," said old Arabella, delightedly. "I have not been a bridesmaid for nearly forty years. I wore hoop-skirts on the last occasion. I will get them out to lend distinction to your wedding. No one who

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sees me in hoop-skirts on the ninth of next April will ever forget the occasion."

"No," said young Faring, with profound conviction. "No, it would be impossible. Never will there have been such a wedding." He rose and made his adieux.

"Good-bye, Aunt Arabella," he said. "I am going to make my own small preparations. I cannot, perhaps, rival you in the hoop-skirts, but I shall try to do my little best with what I have. Never will there have been such a wedding, I promise you."

Outside in the street he hailed a cab, and had himself driven to his chambers in Forty-fourth Street. It was an hour in which he might have found men whom he knew and liked at either of the two clubs to which he belonged, but he felt a strong desire to be quite alone. There were things to be thought out and decided.

In his rooms he filled and lighted a pipe, and sat down with Béatrix Buchanan's letter on his knees, and he read the letter through for the fourth time. Then he began to count days, going over, before each month, the little doggerel lines about "Thirty days hath September," etc.; for he could never remember without it which months had thirty and which thirty-one. Half-way through he stopped to laugh; for it came into his mind that Béatrix, in her letter, had said he would do just this—count the coming days.

Then there was to be settled his occupation for the coming six months—indeed, for the remainder of his life, since his life was, happily, to be no longer independent. So far as income was concerned, there was no necessity for occupation of any sort, since he had from the estate of his father, who was dead, a matter

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of ten to twelve thousand a year, and would have, eventually, from a certain uncle who was already an old man, very much more. Under ordinary circumstances this matter of income would have made no difference to him, save in the way of offering him increased resources; for, like almost all men who lead very active lives, he had a great scorn for idleness, and was unable patiently to exist in it for more than a few weeks. But this new future which awaited him, glorious, radiant, golden-hued, at the end of the dark passage of those six dreary months took from him all his previous standards and habits of thought. He felt himself unable to see into it. It stood, as he pictured it, there at the end of that dark passage, unspeakably beautiful—rather like the tangible gold and mother-of-pearl heaven which simple, mediæval souls imagined—a place of delights, of dreams realized; but he could not picture activities there—the daily round of life, the drudgery of work. In Nirvana there is no toil.

Quite beyond this he had a simple-hearted and naïve determination to expend all the energy that the remainder of his life might possess in the sole effort to make Béatrix Buchanan happy—to make her forget that there had been such a thing as a past of bitterness and agony—to make her world a place where beauty and joy and love dwelt, and nothing besides. It was quite characteristic that this should seem to him more worth while than anything else to which he could devote his powers, and that the ordinary ambitions of mankind should seem, in comparison, petty and inconsequential.

When men of Faring's type seriously love a woman, and the love is happy and results in marriage, the

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world at large loses a strong and valuable force in its activities; for these men, being very simple and single-minded by nature, can do but one thing at a time. They do this one thing so very hard and so very steadfastly that, whether it is exploring dangerous country or leading armies or helping to shape the destinies of an empire, or only digging sewers through a city's streets, it is work which succeeds and makes history. But when they love, they love, not like other men, as one of many activities, they love with all that is in them, and they are completely lost to the world without.

It has been said that this is because they have no imagination, and doubtless that is true—at least, in part, for imaginative men squander their imaginations. They apply them to everything about—to the “scheme of things entire”—and consequently are less apt to idealize their own private lives where facts are most intimate and stubborn and realities most salient. All the imagination that the simple and practical soul of Faring's sort possesses, however, he uses like pearls and jewels of price to drape and deck that relationship which is most intimate and most precious to him, and that is why the greatest romances of the world have been played out between women and soldiers or statesmen, and not between women and poets.

So young Faring looked upon his future dimly, through that roseate veil upon which was wrought in golden characters, “*April eighth*,” and was troubled not at all. Remained, however, six very terrible months somehow to be passed. A further excursion into his favorite field, pioneer travel, was rather out of the question. To be sure, a little party of men was preparing to attack that unknown country behind the

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Bolivian Andes, and these men had begged him to go with them, but the thing was a six months' job, with great labor and by no means small danger. It might stretch out into a year. So that was impossible. Moreover, he had been sorely racked, in his last adventure, with paludal fever, and was by no means recovered from its effects. Tropical exploration was closed to him by this trouble for a long time to come.

He had, however, during his months in the upper Orinoco country, gathered a great mass of notes on certain Indian tribes of that section, and he possessed revolutionary views upon the origin of these tribes. It seemed to him that the coming months might not unprofitably be spent in putting notes and views into the form of a book, as he had more than once been urged to do. He had no literary gift whatever, but few explorers have. The two things seldom go together. Still he had the knowledge, and his facts and views, set forth with the simple bluntness of which he was only capable, might, he thought—and thought rightly—be of interest to those men who care about South-American Indians and where they may have had their origin.

Of much more immediate importance than all this, however, was the working out of just how many days lie between the eighth of October and the eighth of April. He found a small calendar which had never been disturbed since its purchase. It had a leaf for each day in the year, with a sort of text under the number on each leaf—an improving moral sentiment. He tore off the leaves from January 1st to October 8th, and hung the thing on the wall just above his writing-table. The leaves that remained—from the current day to the end of December—seemed to him

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to make a dishearteningly thick packet, and he reflected that they counted but half of his dreary waste of probation.

"It's long, Betty," said he, staring under his brows at the little calendar on the wall. "Sixty minutes in each hour! Twenty-four hours in each day! Thirty days or thirty-one in each month!

"It's long, Betty! Long!"

IX

BUT WE WIN TO THE GATES AT LAST

DULY, on April 9th, in a damp, little, ivy-smothered church which fronted the "Green" of a Connecticut village where she had spent the winter with a certain old kinswoman, Béatrix Buchanan was married to Harry Faring. Arabella Crowley was there—not as bridesmaid, and without the hoop-skirts, alas!—and little Alianor Trevor, and the faithful elderly lawyer, who wept. These, with the kinswoman—a Mrs. Dawlish—and her little granddaughter, made up the wedding-party, for neither Béatrix nor Faring wished to have many people there.

"Our happiness," Béatrix said, "is our own affair, and interests very few people. Let us not be stared at and gossiped over by a crowd."

Her summons to Faring had reached him about noon on the day preceding this. It was very short, only telling him where she was, with a little laugh of triumph over having been so near him all those months without his discovering it, and saying that if he chose he might come to see her.

Faring had been waiting since early morning with his luggage ready locked and strapped. He sent his man to the station with the luggage, and himself made a quick dash down to Gramercy Park, where he found

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Arabella Crowley just entering the house from an early drive.

"She says I may 'come and see her,'" he jeered to the old woman. Mrs. Crowley told his wife, long afterwards, that he was an absurd picture of that joy which intimately resembles imbecility. "'Come and see her,' so please you. I expect she thinks that we'll talk it over at leisure and get ourselves engaged, and be married some time in the autumn—if not later still. Ha! She'll find herself the most thoroughly undeceived young woman in America. You're due at a wedding to-morrow, Aunt Arabella. Oh! and bring Alianor Trevor, too, and that lawyer-man. I haven't time to see them myself. Come down to-night or on an early morning train." Then, says Mrs. Crowley, he was off in three leaps to his cab, with a parting wave of the hand. She says the cab turned into Lexington Avenue on one wheel, like a Roman chariot in a hippodrome race.

The trains seemed exceedingly slow to him—which was perhaps not unnatural—and when, at South Norwalk, he had to change to the little branch line which ran north into the hills, and waited an hour in the station there, it seemed to him that those dreadful six months of winter were beginning all over again, and he worked himself up into quite a temper over the mismanagement of the New York, New Haven & Hartford railway.

He had left New York shortly before two o'clock, but it was nearly five when he was set down at a tiny village which seemed to be all elm-trees that met in arches over the streets, and flowering shrubs not yet in flower, and white-painted fences before white-painted colonial houses a little out-at-elbows.

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He sent his luggage to the inn, and, taking directions from a station porter, walked down one side of the "Green," where spring's first signs were beginning, past the ivied church, upon which he looked with a fine proprietary air, and so at last came to a house exactly like the other houses, white-painted—not very recently—green-shuttered, pillared and pilastered, set about with clumps of syringas and snowballs and lilacs and such, guarded by forbidding palings in the midst of which a gate swung in the breeze and dismally creaked a welcome.

To the door came a lean and flat-chested old woman with tight gray hair, who peered at him through gold-bowed spectacles. He demanded Mrs. Buchanan, and the old woman's grim face softened into something which was meant for a smile, and she let him in.

"Mis' Buchanan's in the garden—back of the house," she said. "She wa'n't expectin' you till later on, I guess. I'll let her know."

"Might I not go through into the garden and find her there?" asked Faring, and the old woman said she supposed he might if he wanted to.

She led him through the long hallway which, with doors at each end, seemingly bisected the square house, and let him out upon a rear porch not unlike the front one. Before him lay a stretch of garden, bare yet save for tulips and early crocuses. A gravel path led through it to a gate in a low stone-wall, and, beyond the wall, went on under grape-arbors through an orchard to a little border of turf beside a brook.

And here, on the stream's bank, wandered one in white, tall, slender, moving very like a queen in a book. Also she sang, in a hushed, murmuring voice, gay little bits of song all about spring and such.

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Young Faring's heart, after that old way it had, leaped suddenly and began to race. A sort of vertigo smote him, and under the last of the orchard trees he halted, breathing hard. At just that moment the woman in white by the stream's edge saw him, and gave a loud cry.

He had reason to believe that he crossed the stretch of turf which lay between them, but he did not know he moved. The earth and the heavens above the earth were breaking up, and the elements were in turmoil, but from a long distance he heard cries and murmurings and something like a sobbing. Then his lips were burned with fire, and a very exquisite throbbing, which was not the throbbing of his own heart, beat upon his breast, and the madness passed, leaving him shaken but sane.

After a time, when he could force words to his tongue:

"You are going to be married to-morrow," he said, and was displeased to find that his voice was far from steady.

"You are mad," said Béatrix Buchanan, her face hidden upon his breast. "You are mad; but I do not care. I am mad, too. Of course, I am not going to be married to-morrow."

"Wait and see," said the man.

She raised her face to him, and that vertigo returned, blinding his eyes. There was something almost terrible in the might of the passion which swayed and shook and engulfed these two who had been so long starved.

"Do you mean that?" she demanded.

"Wait and see," said he again, through darkness.

"Oh, I'm glad!" she cried. "It's absurd, and it's

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shameless, and I am not prepared, but I'm glad. I have been alone too long. I'm glad, glad, glad!"

A little child, Mrs. Dawlish's granddaughter, came through the orchard and found the two there, white-faced, clinging together, speaking in half-fierce, half-choked bursts of words, and she was frightened, and ran away whimpering.

Afterwards, when this first storm and stress of emotion had swept past them and died away, leaving them calm once more, they talked a long time of the months gone by—the months of separation that Béatrix had decreed. Faring told her about the book he had been writing—the Indian book, which was now finished and awaiting an autumn publication. And he told her what he knew of Arabella Crowley. "She's coming here to-morrow," he said. And of little Miss Trevor, who had been none too well during the winter. And Béatrix spoke of her quiet existence in the little village, and of her friendship with the rector of the parish who had drawn her into his work among the village poor, and, before she knew it, had her almost as busy and as interested in it as he was himself.

"Oh, I've been very, very good, Harry," she said, with a little laugh. "I've been astonishingly good. I never did anything of that sort before—working for the poor and the sick, you know. I hardly knew that such people existed. I don't quite know how I got so deeply into it. Yes I do, though. It was that blessed and angelic old man, the rector. *He's* good, if you like. And he has a trick of making everybody about him good. Harry, I've—don't laugh!—I've *prayed* this winter—for the first time. *Really* prayed, you know. I— Oh, well, what's the use of trying to tell. Anyhow, I've tried to be good—better. It

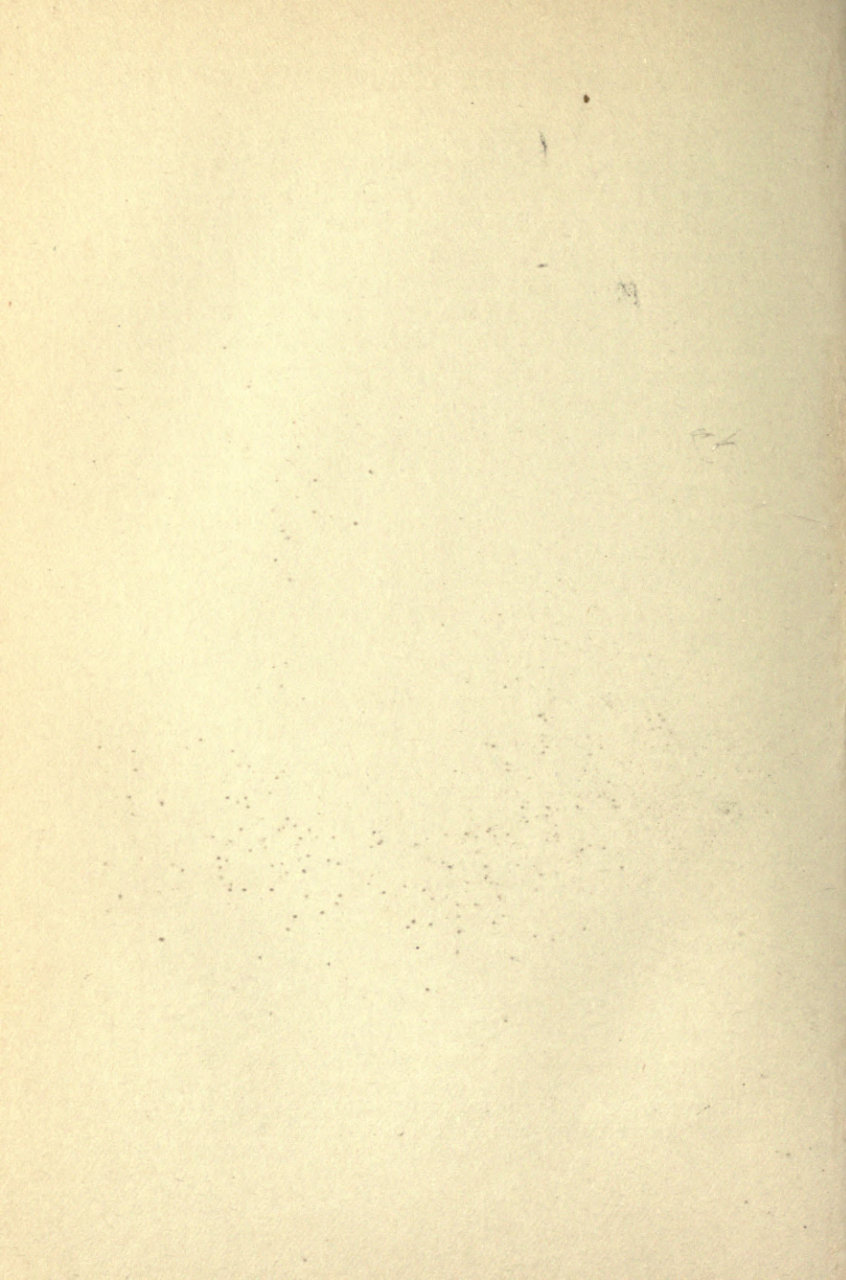
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was, I expect, by way of trying to curry favor with God so that he would let you and me be happy afterwards. Savages do that, don't they? They bring little presents and sacrifices and things, and give them to their gods when they have an especial reason for wanting to be unmolested. So I've been a sort of savage—but a very good savage. I've prayed very hard that we may be left alone to make each other happy—that nothing evil may come to us. I wonder if God has heard. Harry!" She turned to him, and her face was very earnest and a little drawn and pale. "Harry," she said, "I wonder if we are wise to marry each other. If we do not do it I shall die, that's certain. But I wonder—I wonder if I shall bring you happiness. It's a serious thing, this marrying, you know. No. Let me talk on. Don't stop me. Of one thing I'm certain, anyhow. Whatever may come, I *believe* I'm going to make you happy. I feel it somehow, as women do feel things. I wonder if I'm wrong. I believe that there are no more troubles and griefs in store for us. If I thought not—if I thought that I was bringing you suffering instead of happiness—I should take poison or something and die, but I feel strongly that you and I are done with griefs. And oh, I want to make up to you what you've suffered in these last years! I want so to make your life beautiful, Harry. That's what I'm marrying you for."

It seemed to Faring that there was an unnecessary earnestness in her tone—something almost morbid—but he reflected that she had been for a long time alone, brooding a great deal, doubtless, and he thought further of what bitterness her former marriage had brought upon her. It was not strange that she should shrink and tremble a bit. But as soon as he



“NOTHING WILL FIND ITS WAY INTO OUR GARDEN TO
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could he turned the talk to something else, and presently the vague trouble went out of her eyes and the color came flooding back to her cheeks.

"I have a surprise for you," she said. "I wonder if you'll like it. You must, though, for it's a pet plan of mine, and I'm very fond of it. Do you remember the brick cottage with the very beautiful garden a mile or more beyond the Lodge—Buchanan Lodge? It is a part of the estate, but it has always been let to some one, at least in the spring and summer time. You know it lies half a mile in from the high-road at the end of its own lane, and it has a few acres of ground and a tiny stream and that gorgeous old garden. The whole thing is quite out of sight of the Lodge beyond a ridge of hills. Do you remember it?"

"Yes," said he. "Oh yes, I remember. A painter chap and his wife had it when I knew it last. It's a jolly place."

"Well," she said, "we're going to live there."

"In the moon, if you like," said he, laughing.

"No, in my cottage," she said. "Harry, it's all covered with ivy and wistaria and . . . and there's a sundial with something Latin on it that I can't read—the sundial came from Tivoli—and there's a pool with irises and lotos lilies and—oh, it's a duck of a cottage! Think of being buried there quite alone by ourselves all summer long! Do you want a better honeymoon?"

"I don't," said Faring. "And I want to go now, at once. When can we go there?" She hid her face from him.

"That's the nice part," she said, "and the shameless part. It's—it's all ready for us—servants and all. You see," she explained, crimson-cheeked, "I was

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afraid. I thought—that is—well, I thought you might insist upon marrying me immediately, as you're doing, in this indecent fashion, and so I—I've been quietly having them get the cottage ready, in case—you know." Faring began to laugh, and she beat him. "If you laugh at me," she said, "I shall cry. You're a brute, Harry!"

"We'll go there to-morrow," he said. "We'll send our luggage on in the morning and motor down ourselves after the great event in that little church yonder. So we shall begin properly."

Béatrix looked up at him and nodded. She could not quite speak just then, and she remained silent for a little time, smiling to herself.

"Yes," she said, presently. "We shall begin properly—you and I alone together—in our garden. Good beginnings make good endings, don't they, Harry? Don't they? Nothing will find its way into our garden to hurt us or rob us of our happiness."

She gave a little shiver.

"I'm cold," she said. "Come up to the house. You haven't met my cousin, have you? She's a dear old woman. Come."

X

THE HOUSE OF CLOUD AND SUNBEAM

THAT year was famous throughout certain parts of the country for an extraordinarily early spring. By mid-April the fruit trees were white with bloom, and the flowering shrubs were making the air sweet. The month of May was a June come before its time, with roses and soft nights and blazing noontides.

"It has been arranged," said Béatrix Faring, "solely in our honor—that our honeymoon should be perfect in absolutely every way from the very beginning." She was sitting upon a mossy sundial and sticking red roses in her hair with vain intent.

"Well, of all the cheek," said her husband, "yours is the cheekiest I've met! Claiming the very weather now, are you? You're a bit grasping."

"Grasp all I choose," she said, calmly. "I have no shame whatever, so you needn't call names. I'm beyond their reach. As for this weather, it *is* ours, and it was made for us. Dieu merci! Are you glad you married me?"

"Yes," said Faring, without hesitation, "I am." And his wife laughed. It had been so like him to say just that without ornamentation.

"*What* a chance for a flowery speech!" she said. "And lost, completely lost, ignored. Harry, my good man, you have less small talk than anybody I

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ever knew. Less, I think, than anybody who ever lived—except Stambolof, who has no talk at all. What a very good thing it is that you didn't live in the days of euphuism. It would be so difficult for you to make little poems about my eyelashes, or the way I walk, or the way I do my hair. You wouldn't look at all well mooning about with your hair uncombed and your clothes unpressed. It's not your form."

Faring shook his head with a little sigh.

"No, I expect it isn't," he said. "I'm sorry. I rather wish it were. I mean to say I wish I could say the sort of things I want to say—the sort of things I think. I know all about your eyelashes, and the way you walk, and how you do your hair, and several million other things, and I—I love them all, too. Jove, I should think I do! But I'm so confoundedly tongue-tied. You know, when you're not in sight I think of heaps of things that I want to say, and I could say 'em, too, just then. Only when you come back again everything goes out of my head, but—but *you*, you know, and I can't do anything but stare. And—my heart begins to go off at a tremendous pace, and I— What a rotter I am when it comes to putting things!"

He was standing close before her, as she sat on the high sundial, with his hands resting on the moss-covered stone, one on either side. Béatrix slipped down to her feet, and his arms closed behind her and she laid her face on his breast.

"If you were the littlest bit different to what you are," she said, "I should loathe you—and I should never have married you—and we shouldn't be here among our roses, and—and I love you very much, and

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I don't mind your knowing it. There! Come and walk. I want to move about. The sun is down now, so it will be cooler."

They walked slowly down through the garden, and Béatrix went, leaning back against her husband's shoulder, her head in the hollow of his neck, while his arm held her from stumbling. It was a way they had. They went down through the ranks of roses and through a tangle of old-fashioned garden below where grew larkspurs and love-in-a-mist and sweet-williams and little spice-pinks and phlox, and such pleasant things, and came to a stretch of open where the artificial pool, with its Eastern water-plants, lay still and dark and sleeping. Here a path mounted gently a rise of ground, a rocky knoll upon whose summit, under an open, sheltering roof, dwelt an unclothed lady—crippled as well, for she had but one arm—called Phryne, an Italian lady of a ripe age, though she posed for Greek of a riper age still. About this shameless and not over-truthful person stood a semicircle of stone benches, much given over to war-ringing or love-making birds, and from these benches, sitting, one looked westward across a half-mile of moor upon the sea.

Béatrix Faring and her lord came under the sheltering roof, and disposed themselves upon one of the stone benches. As they had walked they sat, the woman's shoulders upon her husband's breast, her head laid back into the hollow of his neck. A number of argumentative sparrows got up and left the place, jeering rudely.

Béatrix looked out from half-shut eyes upon the tranquil sea, where pearly evening lights shimmered and changed.

"A month," she said, slowly. "One little, little

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month. A month *is* a tiny thing, isn't it? But what an immensity, what a lifetime, what a cycle it has been for you and me, highness! What other undreamed-of worlds it has opened! What mountain-peaks we've climbed, unafraid and unashamed! Do you remember my writing to you once that my life must henceforth be in the valleys—where the shadows were—that the peaks were not for me? Ah, weren't they, though! Peaks, indeed! I live and move and have my passionate being," she said, still slowly, "in a sort of dream, a golden haze, a rose-tinted cloud. Live? Do we indeed live, Harry? Where's the rest of the world, then, that should live about us? Is there a world? I have not seen it, nor heard it, nor given it thought. We two have left the world. It cannot touch us. It is great distances away. We two on our mountain-peak know nothing of worlds and the little things that swarm about them. Our faces are turned to glories that they cannot see. Our hearts shake with raptures that they could not bear." She moved her head gently against his cheek.

"Harry," she said, and Faring waited for her to go on when she paused after the name. "Harry," she said again, presently, "how—dear to you has this month of ours been? What would you be willing to pay for it if you had to pay? If our happiness should end to-night, if you should by some miracle find yourself back again in that hopeless, interminable desert of waiting? Or, worse still, if, as the price of what we've had, you must suffer misery, shame, dishonor, would you still be glad of our month here, or would you think the price too high? Tell me!"

"Dishonor!" said he, picking the one word that she knew he would pick.

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"Yes," she said, steadily, "even dishonor."

"That's a strong word, Betty," he said. "I don't know— Ah, but it's absurd! You're putting an impossible case. How could we have to pay for our happiness by dishonor? It's impossible. We've done no sin in marrying each other. Dearest, don't put morbid questions to yourself or to me. It's going out of your way for unhappiness."

"But," she argued, with a little laugh, "*I have* to go out of my way for unhappiness. There is none near me, thank God!"

"Thank God!" said he.

"So let me spin my foolish fancies," she said. "They can do no harm. They will not make me sad, for I live in regions above and beyond sadness—above and beyond all woes. I cannot see them even when I look down from my clouds. But somewhere below us, Harry, people go about in misery as we used to go; people walk in shadows as we used to walk. My heart bleeds for them—a little, as much as a heart can that's away up in a heaven of its own with only one other heart—a heart that's selfish, and very mad with joy, and bewildered still over finding that such joy exists. Look! There's our cloud, your cloud and mine, Harry, where we live above the world!"

She pointed westward, high over the sea, where a single small cloud hung motionless. It was rosy with the last glow of the hidden sun, rosy and golden and opalescent together, a solid thing of fixed, unchanging contour, a throne of pearl, a couch of unspeakable splendor, a dwelling fit, indeed, for two such love-enthralled hearts as Béatrix Faring talked of.

But somewhere down beyond the sea's far rim there would seem to have been other drifting veils which

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just then caught and draped the hidden sun; for, as the man and woman watched, suddenly the western glow paled and grayed, and those tints of rose and pearl began to die from the heart's throne of splendor.

Béatrix gave a little cry.

"Ah, it's fading, fading!" she said. "It's dying, Harry!" And she shook from head to foot with a quick shiver. "It's dying!" she said again, and put up her hands over her face.

"Can nothing last?" she said. "Must everything go like that? Pale and fade away until it's dead? Not love, Harry—not love! That's immortal. Say it! I want to hear you say it! I want to believe it. Love's immortal, isn't it? Ah, I'm a fool! I must be nervous to-night. And I thought I had done with nerves. I'm a fool!" She turned her face away from the western sea, so that, lying upon the man's breast, it touched his bent cheek.

"Say something!" she begged. "Talk to me. I talk, and talk, and talk—such wandering, foolish nonsense, and you say nothing. Tell me—things. I don't want to talk any more. I want to listen."

"What shall I say?" he demanded. "Talking's not my—line, you know. I can do almost anything else better."

"You might tell me," she suggested, with a little, whispering laugh, "how very much nicer I am than other people. Or would that be too much of a struggle for you? You might tell me how much you—cared in those days when you thought we could never be—here, like this."

She felt the muscles of his neck and shoulder draw tight in the sudden movement he made, a movement like a shiver, and, without looking up, she knew how

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his face must be as the picture of those desert days came bitterly before him. It was more eloquent to her than any words could have been, pleased her far more than anything he could have said, however impassioned.

"I'm afraid I—can't talk about that," he said, with the odd, hurried shyness which always came upon him in a moment of strong feeling. "It's too much of a nightmare—like the horrible thing that one sees in a fever. And speaking of fever"—he gave a little laugh—"there's a chap out in China now who knows more about you and me—I mean to say about how much I—cared, and all that—than he ought to know. But he's a good chap—he doesn't gossip. He doesn't talk at all except to ask for what he wants or to give orders, so it's all right. You see, he was with me on the upper Orinoco a year ago last winter. You were in Paris then, and I had a bad go of swamp-fever, and was off my head for days. This chap, whose name is Browning, saw me through it—nursed me like a woman. Then, when it was over with, he asked the only unnecessary question I ever heard from him. He asked me who 'Betty' was, and why in God's name I didn't marry her instead of talking about it so much. I seemed to have bored him dreadfully."

Béatrix put up a hand and touched his cheek.

"Oh, Harry, Harry!" she mourned. "You all alone down in that horrible wilderness, ill, in danger of death, and I not by to care for you! No, you're right. Let's not think of it. It's too much like a nightmare. I ache to think of it." But after a little she gave a small laugh.

"Your Browning man is a beast!" she said. "I expect he hated my very name, didn't he? I expect he

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hated all women. He sounds like that sort of man. Ah, well, let him wait! One day a woman will take him in hand and civilize him."

"He wore a locket about his neck on a chain," said Faring. "I fancy some one had civilized him already, or broken his heart, maybe. It's the same."

"No talk of broken hearts, my dear," said Béatrix. "Broken hearts are things we, on our mountain-peak, know nothing of. They're barred from our paradise—forever. Hold me close, highness. I'm—sleepy."

So, in such lotos-land fashion, these two lived and had their enraptured being. They dwelt, as the woman had said, in a sort of dream, an enduring trance. It was as if they had been literally and physically caught up into that pearl-tinted cloud of her fancy, very far above the world and the world's life. It is entirely impossible to give any picture, however inadequate, of such an existence, because no great exaltation, whether of spirit or of heart, has any outward tangible characteristics which may be described. To understand such a state requires a corresponding exaltation, and words cannot produce that.

Of their friends they were, during this time, entirely careless. They had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear, and to their friends they were a source of wonder and exasperation.

Arabella Crowley, who was settled in her Baychester place, Red Rose, occasionally motored over to see them, but she invariably retreated using language which was almost unlady-like.

"I wash my hands of them!" she said, furiously, for the twentieth time to little Miss Trevor, who was spending the month of June with her. "They are in-

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sufferable. They were positively rude to me to-day. I wash my hands of them!"

Miss Trevor laughed.

"You're always washing your hands of people, Aunt Arabella," she said. "Your hands must be inordinately clean." She gave a little sigh.

"But they *are* rather impossible, aren't they?" she said. "I'm almost sorry I promised to go to them for this week-end. When Betty asked me I really thought she meant it, and I said yes on the spur of the moment, but I'll wager something that she has long since forgotten I'm coming, and that she'll be sorry to see me. I expect there will be no one else there, and I shall have a very dull time."

"They'd best not ask *me* to come to them for any week-ends!" said the old woman, grimly. "I should express myself with a freedom that would make them jump, I think. They're quite too ridiculous. You'd think that no one was ever in love before or ever married, to hear them go on. They have not the slightest glimmer of any humor left in them—not that either of them ever had any to spare at any time. They take each other with a tragic solemnity that makes me want to slap them both."

"I expect that's just it, isn't it?" said the girl. "They have no sense of humor at all. They *are* tragic. It—it frightens me somehow. There's something fatal about it. It's unnatural. And, of course, it can't go on forever. I wonder what will happen? It reminds me," she said, "of what certain people in Paris used to tell me about the marriage of the Earl of Strobe's son, Lord Stratton, to the elder Isabeau de Monsigny, the present Isabeau's mother. She died when the child was a year or so old. It seems that

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those two were just as passionately and seriously in love as Betty and Harry Faring are, and just as careless of the rest of the world. They had no humor, either, and I expect people can't live long without it. These people told me that Lord Stratton and his wife together were a sight that no one could ever forget. They said that the two would walk about the park at Monsigny for hours, never saying a word, but moving so that they touched each other as they walked. They said that Isabeau could never be in the room with her husband without being near him, touching him somewhere. It was very, very beautiful, but, of course, it couldn't last. What will happen to these two, do you think?"

Mrs. Crowley stirred impatiently.

"Oh, they will tire of making gods of each other eventually," she said, "and they'll become sensible human beings like the rest of us, I expect. I wish they wouldn't be so long about it. They are a great trial to me."

The girl shook her head.

"They're too serious and too exalted to come down easily from their clouds," she said. "I'm afraid. I can't help fearing that it will end in some tragedy. I'm afraid."

But, oddly enough, when tragedy came, it was first to her—lightning out of a blue sky.

XI

STAMBOLOF GOES

SHE spent the week-end with the Farings, as had been arranged, and the time passed not so ill as she had feared. It was not gay, to be sure; for there was no one else at the cottage, Béatrix apologized, with a little, half-ashamed laugh. "We have neglected people so," she said, "that now I simply dare not ask any one here. Every one is angry at us." Still the two lovers made a heroic effort to descend from their heights and play a brief rôle as human beings, and the Saturday and Sunday passed pleasantly enough.

It was on Monday morning that the blow came. The three were sitting on the long, shaded garden porch of the house waiting for Arabella Crowley's motor, which was to come and bear Miss Trevor and her portmanteau back to Red Rose.

As they sat there talking a servant brought the letters which had come in the morning post, and Béatrix Faring held up one of them with an exclamation of surprise. .

"From Paris," she said. "And a very fat letter, too. See all the stamps. It's not from Lord Strobe or from Stambolof, for I know their hands." She held the envelope out towards Alianor Trevor.

"Do you recognize the writing?" she asked.

A touch of pink came into the girl's cheeks.

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"It is from Mr. Braithwaite, I think," she said.

"What in the world," cried the elder woman, "can he be writing me such a huge letter about? To be sure, he sent us a gorgeous wedding present, but we never write to each other." She tore open the envelope, and unfolded the many sheets.

"My dear Mrs. Faring," she read, aloud, "Boris Stambolof is dead, and after—" She gave a sharp cry of horror, and her eyes flashed swiftly towards Alianor Trevor. The written sheets slipped from her lap to the floor of the porch, and lay there scattered. The girl had risen to her feet, and stood before her chair very white but silent. Her hands were pressed together over her heart. Mrs. Faring started up towards her.

"Oh, dearest, dearest!" she cried, sobbing, "I didn't—know. I should have been careful. I read without thinking. Oh, how terrible!" But the girl pushed her back when she would have taken her into her arms.

"Please—go on," she said, very quietly. "Please read the letter. I am—not sorry. He wished to die. I—oh, please, please go on! Don't you see that I cannot bear waiting!"

Béatrix groped blindly for the sheets of the letter, and she looked towards her husband, who nodded gravely back at her. She tried to read, but her hands holding the paper shook nervously, and she thrust the thing towards Faring.

"I—cannot," she said. "Read it, Harry!" and Faring went on with what young Braithwaite had written.

"After consulting with Lord Strobe," he read, "I have decided to write to you and tell you how his death came about, and to ask you to break the thing

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as gently as you can to Miss Trevor. It seems to me very terrible that I should have to be messenger of such news to her, because, as I think you know, I care for her more than for any one else living, and she loved Boris Stambolof. Still it must be I who shall tell, for I was with Stambolof to the end and after, and there is no one to relieve me of my unwelcome task.

“‘You know, I believe, about that unfortunate affair of ten years ago—the affair that wrecked Stambolof’s life and put an end to the life of the Countess Amélie de Colonne as well as—so it was thought—to the life of her husband. It has been believed without question that Stambolof, in a very informal duel, killed the Count de Colonne because de Colonne had grossly insulted his wife at a dinner-party at Château Colonne, near Fontainebleau. Well, it appears that though the Frenchman was left for dead in the hall of his château, there remained some spark of life in him, and a certain faithful old servant discovered this, and secretly nursed his master back to health. Then, as secretly, Colonne went away, and spent ten years in the East and among the Pacific islands. It seems to have come to him, during these years, that he had behaved like a blackguard towards his beautiful young wife, whom he had really loved very much in spite of his ugly temper and his mad jealousy, and that, at last, he felt that he must come back to Europe, find Stambolof, if possible, and beg him to finish the work which he had bungled ten years before.

“‘I am aware that this, stated briefly and, as it were, coldly, sounds very absurd, but I cannot attempt to give you the man’s feeling over the matter as I heard it from his own lips. You must try to comprehend that these ten years of aimless wandering had

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been for him ten years of an exceedingly bitter hell of remorse and pain and self-loathing. He was, I think, wellnigh mad from it all when, four nights ago, the evening of the twenty-sixth of May, Stambolof and I came quite by accident upon him in a restaurant here in Paris. I, of course, did not know him, but Stambolof did at once. Only he thought the man was a ghost, a spirit, come to haunt him, and, literally, he very nearly fainted away on the spot.

“Without going into wearisome detail, I will say simply that after an hour of talk, which was mostly devoted to the Frenchman’s nerve-shattered self-recriminations and prayers to Stambolof to end his torture, the two agreed that the unfinished duel must be refought. Stambolof, to my surprise, took the idea rather as a matter of course. He seemed to need no urging. It seemed as if he felt it a sacred and solemn duty to rid the earth of Henri de Colonne. And yet he seemed no longer to feel any animosity towards the man. He took his hand, and spoke to him, throughout the talk, with something more than courtesy. Indeed, I think no one could have felt bitterness towards that broken, haunted wreck who trembled and wept the while he begged for death at the hands of his old enemy.

“It was somewhat before midnight when we finished our talk—when the two men concerned finished, I should say—for I had no part in it, and tried more than once to get away. But there was still a train to be had from the Gare de Lyon which would take us to one of the Fontainebleau stations where Colonne’s trap would meet us. He had meant in any case to go out on that late train. So we three drove to the Gare de Lyon, and at Bois-le-Roi left the train and drove

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for a half-hour through the forest to Château Colonne. It had been agreed that the meeting should take place at the first light of the morning. Of course, the affair was most irregular and quite in violation of any code, but so had been that first encounter ten years before, and I think Stambolof had no heart to deny poor Colonne's prayers for haste.

"As for me, I have no heart to go on with what I must tell. The climax which came in the dawn of the next morning was so unlooked for. I think no one of us three had ever for an instant considered it as even possible. The affair was to be almost in the nature of an execution, and though Stambolof, before the two crossed swords, made the Frenchman swear solemnly that he would fight to his utmost, that he would not throw his life away, I know that he himself expected to take no harm from the encounter.

"They fought out on a little stretch of turf beside a stream which runs behind the château. Besides myself there was only a priest and one servant to see. They fought two engagements with no result, save that de Colonne had a trifling scratch upon his forehead. Then, in the third, by one of those accidents which are so common in sword-play, Boris Stambolof was run through the body, and died in less than five minutes. Before he died, as he lay there on the turf with his head resting on my knees, he asked me to open a certain gold locket which he wore on a chain about his neck. I opened it, and held it before his eyes, and held it to his lips so that he might kiss it. It contained a very beautifully executed miniature of Amélie de Colonne. He went very peacefully. He must have felt pain, but his face showed it very little, only as he drew breath. And once he said, in a whisper:

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““I am glad! Oh, I am glad!”

““He *was* glad, I am sure. Death came to him as a very sweet and unlooked-for boon. And so I suppose we should be glad, too, though for my part I cannot be. I was fond of him. For some years he had been almost an elder brother to me. Also I think of Miss Trevor, and know what a shock this tragedy will be to her. To my mind that is the very saddest of all.

““I have read this letter through, and I find that I have expressed myself very ill. Alas! I have no skill with my pen. I must wait until I see you to tell you more fully of the unfortunate affair, to go into fuller detail. When that will be I cannot at the moment definitely say. I must let at least the first bitterness of grief pass before I shall dare approach Miss Trevor. But as soon as I think it decent and wise I mean to come to her and beg her to give me another answer to the question I asked last year in Paris. My case may be forever hopeless, but until I hear from her own lips that it is so I must hope.

““Lord Strobe asks me to say that he will write within the next week.

““With apologies and regrets for so poorly accomplishing my unpleasant duty, I am,

““Faithfully yours.

““GERALD BRAITHWAITE.””

Little Miss Trevor had sat through the reading of Braithwaite's letter in perfect silence, her eyes on the ground, her hands still in her lap. At the end she rose quietly and went into the house. Béatrix called out after her, and followed her to the door, but, at the door, stopped, and after a moment turned back.

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"I cannot—comfort her," she said. "Poor child! I cannot comfort her. She's best alone." She came slowly across the porch to where her husband stood, and moved close to him, as if his nearness gave her the comfort she could not bring to the girl who had gone in-doors, but she did not touch him or look up. She stood there for a long time in silence staring out across the gardens. Then at last she said, very sadly:

"The first shadow—across our paradise, Harry! That poor, stricken child! I wish I could soothe her, but I cannot. No one could. She loved him in her hopeless, adoring fashion. She'll marry Gerald Braithwaite, though, in time. The first shadow!" She drew her shoulders together in a little shiver, and Faring slipped an arm about them and drew her closer to him.

"I don't grieve for Stambolof," she said, presently. "He wished to die. He was only waiting. Oh, Harry, I do not grieve very much for anybody. Somehow I can't. I cannot feel acutely for other people's suffering. It's—terrible, rather. I'm dulled by happiness. It's almost shameful, isn't it? I am so selfish, so wrapped in content and joy that nothing from outside, however cruel and bitter, seems of much importance to me—not even Stambolof's death, and I ought to feel that keenly. I suppose Stambolof was one of the faithfulest friends I ever had. I wonder, Harry, if great happiness is always so—ruthless?" She spoke in a tone of questioning, but Faring did not reply, for he did not know the answer to that. It was a habit of hers, this venturing aloud into the philosophical aspect of anything which came to her mind, this putting of great questions. But to the questions she seemed to expect no answer, and Faring was not

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of that superior and unhesitating class of men who have a set of ready-prepared judgments upon all the whys and wherefores with which humanity eternally tortures itself. He was, as he had so often said to her, tongue-tied, and that was a very good thing, since it is a matter of general knowledge that no two philosophically inclined people can live together for a month at a time without cutting each other's throats or going into a nervous decline.

And so in this present instance, as in others, he wisely held his tongue, and instead of answering he drew his wife closer to him so that she stood in the circle of his arms, leaning back after her favorite fashion against his breast, and they looked out over the beauty and sweetness of their rose garden, where the morning sun was drying the dew, and questions seemed to them very far away and of small moment, very alien and faint with distance, questions and sorrows and deaths and all such foreign things which surely were forever walled out from that paradise wherein they dwelt.

BOOK III

I

A LITTLE GRAY TRAMP ARRIVES

FATE gave them exactly three months—three months to a day—of a happiness probably as great as any two people have ever known, much greater than most people could even imagine, then it came time for the reaping of that harvest which the woman had sown. Only—where one sowed, two went to the reaping, which is the way of the world.

On the morning of July 10th Faring set off alone upon a long-delayed journey to New York and to Washington, where there were a number of important and pressing matters which demanded his personal attention. He was to be gone three days—an eternity! And, at first, when it was found that the long-neglected affairs might no longer be neglected, and that the journey must be made, Béatrix had firmly refused to allow him to go alone.

“Of course I shall go with you!” she said. “Naturally! If I remained here I should die before the first day was done.” But as they spoke more of it, and it appeared that Faring must be very busily occupied during the whole of the time, she altered her first determination and, upon her husband’s advice, decided to stay at home. Moreover, the weather was very hot, and travelling would be a torture. There was another thing also to influence her. She was by nature thor-

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oughly introspective and experimental, and the instinct which leads a child to starve itself before a prospective feast moved her to inflict upon herself this stretch of three barren days by way of sweetening the long days to follow.

"It will be good for me," she said—"good for us both, this going without food and drink and air and sunshine for a little time. It will be for me starvation, almost literally, but I shall be rather glad of the opportunity to sit still—and alone—and think over my blessings. I shall appreciate you, highness, when you return. I shall appreciate you amazingly."

They made quite a little tragedy of his going, laughing at themselves shamefacedly the while. Béatrix followed the trap to the inner gate of the long, laurel-bordered lane, which led out to the highway a half-mile distant, and she wept a bit as the trap disappeared down the lane. Then she laughed at her tears, and, having wept a little more, walked slowly back to the cottage and through it to the gardens which she loved.

It appeared that the late roses were unwell, and the gardener, a surly old Scotsman, was among them, spraying them with an evil liquid out of a bucket. Béatrix stopped a moment to watch him, and the man lifted up his voice in lament over his perishing charges, which alone, of all things in the world, he loved.

"Ye maun find me a helper, mem!" he said, despondently. "I hae nae herrt for the grass-cuttin' an' the waterin' an' a'; an' yon' stable lads are no matter o' use. Ye maun find me a helper to tak the rough o' the worrk. My rosies ha'e need o' me a' the while."

Béatrix tried to make a proper show of sympathy and concern, but, although she also loved her roses, she

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could not, in just that moment, make a tragedy out of them.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It would be quite too bad to have them die, wouldn't it? About a helper, though, I hardly know what to do. I expect we shall have to wait until Mr. Faring returns—unless, that is, you know of some one you could hire. Do you?"

The old man shook his white head.

"Na, na!" he said, querulously. "I hae nae pairt wi' these grinnin' laddies hereabouts. They canna be trustit. Aweel, I'll juist hae tae get on till the mais-ter's hame agen. But they're bad, they're awfu' bad! It fair mak's me greet tae see 'em." He bent over his work again, spraying the roses with liquid from a great garden-syringe, and Béatrix passed on.

She had meant to go to the little pavilion on the hill, where Phryne looked over the sea, but it was sunny there in the morning, and, after a moment, she turned back and once more went through the house and through the front garden to that long, laurel-hedged lane where she and her husband often walked early in the day.

It was a shady lane, where the sun came through only in quivering, dappled flecks of gold. Birds dwelt there in a discursive multitude, and squirrels ran across the roadway or, under the high bank, sat up to peer inquisitively at the chance intruder. There were rustlings and squeakings of life from the thicket at either side, there was a cool, still scent of earth and of things growing—the rich aroma of nature's fecundity, the summer smell which is compounded of a thousand thousand exquisite odors and some not so exquisite—the mother earth teeming with richness, drowsing under a July sun.

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Béatrix walked slowly down the lane over those trembling flecks of gold which the sun filtered through the vault of leaves, and with her went a Russian wolf-hound which had followed her from the house. It was a dog which she had owned in the old days at Buchanan Lodge, a very beautiful beast, but, after its kind, unspeakably disdainful of all the world and of the thousand common weaknesses of baser canine flesh. On this morning, as always, it paced soberly beside its mistress, paying no heed whatever to the fascinating sights and smells and mysteries of the wayside. A small red squirrel, very intent upon some affair of moment, sprang up almost from under the dog's feet, and in an agony of terror, dashed into the shelter of the thicket to one side, but the Borzoi only rolled a careless eye in that direction. It was a most superior dog.

A little bent man in ragged garments came shuffling up the lane, evidently from the highway beyond. He held in one hand his battered straw hat—the remains of a cast-off “panama”—and in the other a gnarled stick. He seemed a quaint little man. He had thin, grayish hair and sharp features, but his step had none of the weary lag of the professional tramp's step. He walked, albeit shufflingly, with a certain odd spryness, as if he were glad to be abroad on that fine morning. And as he walked he crooned some tuneless song over and over in a dry voice, turning his head from side to side like a bird to peer into the thicket.

The Russian hound ran forward a few steps, pointing like a bird-dog, and Mrs. Faring halted, meditating a retreat to the house. But after a moment of this she laughed and went on.

“There's no harm in that poor, little, bent-over

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thing!" she said. "If he should turn nasty, Sergei would bite him in two. What an odd creature!"

The gray-haired tramp caught sight of her just then, and caught sight of the dog, too, and he stopped and half turned, as if he meant to run away, but Mrs. Faring said:

"Don't be afraid of the dog. He'll not harm you."

The man grinned feebly, and made a funny little, jerky, shuffling bow. He answered, and his voice was thin, piping—the sort of voice to accord with that quaint personality.

"I—ain't afraid, ma'am," he said. "Leastways, not much afraid, though speakin' in general I don't take to dawgs—nor yet dawgs to me. Thankee, ma'am!" Suddenly he dropped into the beggar's whining sing-song:

"Could you spare a few cents to get a meal with, ma'am. "I haven't had nothin' to eat for—for three days, awmost. I'm hungry, somethin' scandalous!"

Mrs. Faring gave a little cry of distressed pity. The man, in spite of his wizened face and lean, bent body, did not look in the least starved, and she greatly doubted the truth of his statement; but the very suggestion that a human being was hungry waked springs of ready tenderness in her.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" she said. "I'm sorry! Come up to the house! I have no money here, but I will have them give you something to eat and then I will give you some money before you go."

The man made his awkward, jerky little bow again.

"Thankee, ma'am!" he said again. He shuffled uneasily.

"Could you call the dawg off, ma'am?" he said. "I ain't much used to dawgs." The Russian hound

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was sniffing at the stranger's knees with a most uncommon curiosity. Suddenly it began to bark and yelp and to leap about the man, almost pushing him off his feet with its demonstrations of joy. Béatrix called out to it sharply, but it would not come to her. It continued to leap about the gray little tramp, licking his hands and barking.

She took a step forward.

"I don't—understand!" she said. "It's most extraordinary. Sergei never likes strangers." The man looked up at her with his uneasy, half-frightened grin.

"Could you call him off, ma'am?" he said again. "I ain't much used to dawgs."

Blackness came before Béatrix Faring's eyes, with something like a rushing wind, and passed. She thought that she screamed aloud, but there was no sound. She was curiously cold, icy-cold, from head to feet.

She put out one hand a little way.

"Herbert!" she said, in a still voice.

"Eh, what?" said the man. "What?" It was another man's voice. Something came into the wizened face and struggled there—something like a great effort to remember a thing long forgotten—but it passed, and the little bent tramp smiled feebly.

"Could you call off the dawg, ma'am." he said. "I ain't much used to dawgs."

A great boulder stood beside the roadway half embedded in the high bank, covered over with running vines. Béatrix dropped down upon it, for her knees were shaking under her, and that blackness had not quite passed; it hung in a sort of circle before her eyes, blotting out all which was above and below and to either side. Through it, like something seen



"SHE SAT LOOKING AT THE MAN . . . SPINNING SWIFT, DESPERATE
PLANS"

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through a hole in a black cloth the bent, little gray tramp stood clear, with the hound Sergei licking his uneasy hands. Her mind was clear after that first stunned moment, and it worked with a desperate swiftness. Long afterwards, when she went back over that very terrible hour, she realized that her first thought was a passionate prayer of thanksgiving that Harry Faring was away, that she had been left alone to deal with this crisis. From that she went in a flash to ways and means. Cornered she was, hunted, sore pressed, but not yet panic-stricken. At first:

"He must be got away!" she said, in that lightning flash of thought. "Safely away. He knows nothing—there's no danger from him. He must be got away." Then:

"No; no! no! What if he—knows? What if he should come to his senses?" And she sat looking at the man, very alertly, fancy spinning swift, desperate plans, reason rejecting each as it was offered, until, after what seemed to her a very long time, and was, probably, two or three minutes, she stopped out of sheer exhaustion and sat in a sort of apathy, watching the gray little man under her brows.

"What is—your name?" she asked, finally.

The little man waited to cough—a great, rending, tearing cough which shook all his body. Two red spots all at once stood out in his cheeks, and the woman, watching, drew a quick breath.

"Consumption!" she said, dumbly. "He's going to die." She had not a trace of feeling over it. She seemed to be beyond feeling.

"John, ma'am," said the little gray man when he could speak. "'Gentleman John' the gang used to call me. I don't know why—'cept it may be on ac-

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count o' the tales I tells them as I makes up out of my head."

"Tales?" she said, mechanically.

"Yes, ma'am," said the little gray man. "You see, ma'am," he said, "the gang has been good to me—even if they does kick me out at last, being suspicious-like. They picks me up somewheres—I don't remember where—with my head broke open—askin' your pardon, ma'am!—and me very sick, and they nurses me very careful and kind, and feeds me and all, so I tries to please them by making up tales out of my head to tell when we're a-sitting about of an evening. Very rum tales they is. I don't know how I thinks of them, but the gang likes them. They says I'm the finest liar they ever saw, and they just lies on their backs and yells when I tells them about my big house and my horses and carriages and all."

The woman went white.

"Your—house—carriages?" she said, in a whisper.

The little gray man gave an apologetic laugh and shuffled his feet.

"It's only tales, ma'am," he said. "I gets them out of my head. I don't know how they happens to come there. You see, I pretends to the gang that I was once a gentleman with heaps of money—hundreds and hundreds of dollars, and nothing to do but spend it. And I pretends that I've got a fine, big house and men to wait on me and all. I tells them about the horses I've got and what their names is, and about my dawgs—big, handsome dawgs with thin waists—like—just like this dawg, ma'am, that's so friendly-like. I tells them about the man that hasn't nothing to do but wait on me, and how he fixes my bed for me—a grand, big, high bed with a queer thing over it—I don't

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know how I happened to think of that—and how he puts out a new clean shirt for me every single day. You'd ought to hear the gang yell when I tells them that! I tells them about the little white room with a white coffin full of water where I takes a bath, and about the beautiful table where I has my dinner, regular, all white with flowers on it. I don't know why there's flowers on it, but it comes into my head that way. And I tells them heaps of things until they says that they wouldn't ha' missed picking me up and tying me together, like they done, for ten dollars or even twenty. They says they'd rather hear me tell tales than eat." The little man again gave his apologetic, deprecatory laugh, and, reaching out a timid hand, patted the Russian dog's head.

"O' course, it's all very foolish, ma'am," he said; "just tales as I makes up to please the gang. You see, they gets to running in my head sometimes wonderful clear, till I'd swear they was awmost true if they wasn't so damn foolish. All sorts of things goes round and round in my head like—like bad dreams, sort of. That's from being sick, most likely. They was clearer in the beginning. I can't think of such good ones nowadays."

"Oh, Herbert! Herbert!" said the woman, somberly.

The little tramp looked up, always with his ashamed, deprecatory smile, as one who would apologize for cumbering the earth.

"John, ma'am!" said he. "'Gentleman John,' the gang calls me. Begging your pardon, ma'am!"

"Not Herbert Buchanan?" said she. "Not Herbert Buchanan?" She thought that that momentary trouble, that weak bewilderment, once more clouded

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the tramp's eyes, but if so it was gone in a flash. He shook his head patiently.

"No, ma'am," he said. "I don't know him. Of course I wouldn't, ma'am, me being nothing but a hobo, and not in good standing even then. I wouldn't know no gentlemen, ma'am, not such as a beautiful lady like you would know."

"Wait!" said she. "Listen!" Something within her which would not be denied, drove her in the face of terror and peril to press the man, to awaken, if it could be awakened, that feeble inner spark of intelligence—all that was left of Herbert Buchanan, of Buchanan Lodge. She rose to her feet, facing him.

"Don't you remember, Herbert?" she said, slowly. "Don't you remember? Try! Oh, try! Think! You were very tired of everything. Your neves were bad, and you felt that you could not bear the life you were living any longer. You were tired of me; you almost hated me—Béatrix—your wife—Béatrix!"

The little bent tramp looked up from his shuffling feet, and his patient smile faded. At that name, "Béatrix," his face writhed suddenly, and something like fear came into his eyes. He repeated the name aloud, in a halting tone.

"You lost your temper at dinner, Herbert," she said, swiftly. "Don't you remember who were dining with us—the Eversleys and Stambolof, and Aunt Arabella Crowley and Alianor Trevor, and—and one other?" She could not speak Harry Faring's name just then.

"And after dinner," she said, watching his drawn face—"after dinner you went to your own study, alone, and sat there for a long time brooding. Don't you remember the study, that big room with the Chinese

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and Japanese bronzes and the carved panels and the Buddhas? You sat there for hours brooding on how you hated everybody and everything, and then—" She paused, breathing very fast, and the little gray tramp licked his lips, staring at her.

"And then," he said, in an oddly mechanical tone—"then *he* came in by the window."

"He?" cried Béatrix Faring. "Who, Herbert? Who came in?" And she caught her hands up over her mouth, for she saw that she had startled the man away from that dim, faint thread of recollection.

He gave a little shiver, and his face changed, the old, feeble, deprecatory smile returned to him—the smile of the wanderer who has been kicked and out-thrust and cursed at.

"What was I a-saying, ma'am?" he asked. "I—forget-like sometimes. Things comes a-spinning through my head so very remarkable that I don't have time to catch hold of them proper." He looked down to his feet and about him, and stirred uneasily. He had a frightened air.

"I think I'll just be a-going on, ma'am," he said, after a moment. "I only come in to ask for a few cents to buy a meal with. I haven't had nothing to eat for four days—I mean five." The woman gave a low cry, and he looked up at her shamefacedly.

"No, ma'am," he confessed, "that ain't true. That's a lie. They's a pleasant old dame down the road a mile or two as gives me some breakfast an hour ago. She gives me a piece of cold beefsteak and some bread and a half of a pie. I ain't hungry, ma'am; really I ain't. I'll just be a-going on."

But she cried out at him. "No! no!" she said, swiftly. "No, you—mustn't go. I—want you to stay, Herbert."

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"John, ma'am," said the little tramp. "'Gentleman John' the gang calls me. I don't know the gentleman you're a-talking about. I wouldn't, you see, me being nothing but a hobo."

"Yes, yes," she said. "Yes, I'll try to call you—John. But you must stay. I—want to hear more about your friends—this—'gang.' You said 'gang,' did you not? I won't ask you again about Herb—about the other man. I—promise. And I'll give you money, heaps of money. Only stay a little while. Wouldn't you like to sit down?" She pointed to the twin of the boulder upon which she had been sitting. It jutted from the bank a yard or so away.

"Oh, I ain't fit, ma'am," he protested. "I ain't fit to sit down with a beautiful lady like you; I'm only a hobo." But she insisted, and he perched uneasily upon the edge of the rock, turning his battered Panama hat between his hands. The Russian dog sat at his feet and laid its head out upon one of the little man's knees.

"Where," said Béatrix Faring, "was this—gang, of which you speak, living? Near here?"

"Oh no, ma'am," said he. "It was away out West—not far from Chi.—that's Chicago, ma'am. They had a sort of camp, but I don't think they'd lived there always. They ain't there now, neither. They're scattered about on various jobs, though none of them ain't proper first-class guns. They're only second-story-men and moll-buzzers, and sometimes they plays gay-cats for yegg-men in the little towns. They tries hard to learn me the game, but it isn't no good. No one couldn't make a gun out of me. I ain't even fit for moll-buzzing. I can't do nothing but tell tales. They likes the tales, the gang does, but after a bit they gets suspicious and chucks me out."

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"Suspicious?" said the woman. "How suspicious?"

"Well, you see, ma'am," he said, "they says, the gang does, that I knows altogether too much about the tales I tells—how a gentleman lives and all that. They thinks maybe I'm one of these newspaper reporters that goes out and lives with hobos and then writes 'em up in the prints, just like life, with the names and all. One of the gang finds a book somewheres that a man has wrote about hobos and yeggmen and all, and they begins to be leery of me and to sit about talking me over. I tries to tell them that the things is just tales that comes into my head, and that I wasn't never any gentleman like I pretends, but they won't believe me. Then something queer happens to make them sure, and it's all up with me. A dago man comes along one day with a dancing bear. No, he isn't a proper dago man neither, but a Frenchy. He wants to ask the way to the next town west from Chi., but he can't speak nothing but his own silly talk. I don't know how it happens, but all at once I finds myself a-chatting away with him in his Frenchy lingo, fast as you please. I can't explain that to the gang—it just comes to me like the tales—and they turns very nasty over it all, and some of them wants to knife me because I knows too much about them to be let away free, but Kansas—that's my pal—says he'll drop anybody as puts a finger on me, and so, finally, him and me comes away and starts East." The little man's smile became radiant.

"You'd ought to know Kansas, ma'am," he said. "He's the finest pal a man ever has since the world began. He ain't a big gun, because he starts too late in life—him having been a gentleman once. He's only a second-story-man, but if he hadn't wasted all

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that time while he was young he might be cracking cribs with Shenandoah Red and Cal. Gray and Scranton Shorty to-day. He's very bitter about wasting all those years when he was young. It sets him back so. I only wisht I could do something for Kansas, he's so good to me, but I'm no kind of use. I can't learn nothing. It's all on account of the queer things that goes wheeling and spinning through my head every now and then most wonderful."

The little man stopped suddenly.

"But this ain't very interesting to you, ma'am," he said. "I'm a-running on scandalous. A beautiful lady like you wouldn't care nothing about hobos."

"Oh yes, yes," she said, hurriedly. "Yes, I want very much to hear. I'm—much interested. Tell me!" She looked across at him with anxious eyes.

"How long were you living with these—these men—this 'gang'? When was it that they found you, as you said, with your—head injured, and nursed you back to health?"

"Oh, it was near two years ago, ma'am," said the little tramp. "Only that wasn't out West; it was somewheres East. I don't know just where, me being very sick at the time. Kansas, he'd know. It was Kansas found me, with my head broke open. He told me so once, but he don't like to talk about it. I don't know why."

"Two years!" said the woman, in a whisper. "Yes, of course, two years. And this Kansas, this friend—pal—of yours. Where is he now? Why is he not with you?"

The little man shuffled his feet and looked down at them. "Kansas, he's busy just now, ma'am," he said. "He's on a little job a few miles away. He

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didn't want me to help, because I ain't no manner of good. I always spoils everything. You can't train me, ma'am. Not even *you* couldn't. I always gives the whole game away and spoils everything. I'm a-going to meet him at a place he told me about—Kansas knows all this country here like a book—when his job's done. Then if he makes a good get-away we'll be in clover, Kansas and me will, with lots of money, and we can take the Road without having to beg for a long time. We're very fond of the Road. There isn't nothing finer. I don't know," said the little man, with sparkling eyes, "I don't know nothing finer anywheres than just shuffling along the Road of a morning, before the sun is too hot, with nothing to think about or worry about except to wonder what amazing odd things will turn up next. It's so various and sundry, the Road is. There's such remarkable different things may be happening just round the bend, and usually is. It gets into your blood surprising. It was just like that this morning. I'd waked up nice and comfortable, with the little ants a-crawling over me, and the birds a-twittering cheerful over my head, and the sun in my eyes, and when I'd started off, that pleasant old dame as I tells you of, ma'am, she gives me the cold beefsteak and bread and hunk of pie, so that I'm proper fixed inside, and I comes a-trotting down the Road so spry you'd think I was a kid.

"I'd been pretending that I had heaps of money—a hundred dollars—that's a foolish sum, but while you're a-pretending you might as well make it big—and I was settling what I'd do with it all—five dollars here, and a dollar there, and two dollars and a quarter somewheres else—which is a very pleasant way of

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passing your time—when I begins to see things that worries me. There's a white farm-house with green shutters and a queer, square thing on top. I says to myself: 'Here, I know that farm-house. I've saw that before. And,' I says, 'if I remember correct, there's a well with a long well-sweep just round the next bend. Sure enough, round the next bend there's that well with the well-sweep, and at that, the things begins to go a-wheeling and spinning through my head like they does sometimes—so fast that I can't catch hold of them—and I turns into this lane here a-shaking like a scared horse. It's very odd, ma'am."

"Herbert! Herbert!" said the woman, staring sombrelly.

"John, ma'am," said Herbert Buchanan. "'Gentleman John'—though of course I ain't a proper gentleman, me being only a hobo. I can't think how it is about that farm-house and the well with the well-sweep. Maybe I've saw something like them somewheres before. I don't know. It's very queer, but I has so many queer things happen to me that a few more doesn't matter—only I wish my head wouldn't go a-buzzing and a-wheeling like it does. I don't like it."

After that there fell between the two a short silence. The little gray man, whose garrulity seemed for a while to depart from him, stroked the Russian dog's head and chirped to the animal gayly, while Béatrix Faring, still and inert in her place, watched him under her brows.

She had fallen into a sort of apathy. Neither terror nor dread clamored within her. Her mind no longer flashed with desperate swiftness between hope and despair—from one futile loop-hole to another. It was

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almost as still as her torpor-stricken body. Vaguely she realized that this thing which had befallen was a thing long expected, that unconsciously she had been waiting for it to end that glory on the all-too-accessible mountain-peak. Vaguely she realized that it was the price to be paid.

She knew that the full agony was still to come, that in this first hour flesh and spirit were dulled almost past sensation, and at the thought she gave an odd little shiver of pity for the woman who was, later on, to suffer tortures. For the present the woman dwelt in a fog, a deadening vapor.

She looked at the bent, gray little man before her, and dully wondered what terrible adventures and trials he could have endured to alter him from the Herbert Buchanan of her memory to this shambling wreck whose past came to him in the guise of foolish fancies. The thing seemed to her so preposterously unreal, so madly impossible, that once she laughed aloud, and the man looked up from his play with the Russian hound and smiled his apologetic, shamefaced little smile in response.

She watched the wizened face, feature by feature, with a bitter deliberation. Feature by feature it was almost as unlike the face of Herbert Buchanan as a face could be, and yet at the first full look she had known.

Would others know? she demanded of herself, and presently shook her head. It was unthinkable. It had been something beyond the physical which she had recognized. Herbert Buchanan's soul had somehow breathed from this shrunken body into her soul, and she had known it. Surely no one but Buchanan's wife would know.

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That set her again to asking what was to become of the man, and, to some degree, wakened her mind to activity. One thing, she said, was certain. He must be kept in sight. He must not be allowed to go away. What was to be done later she did not know and she dared not think, but the man must be guarded. Who could say when that feeble spark of confused recollection might chance to burst into flame and the creature's past come again to him unclouded? But how to keep him near! One cannot imprison a free man. One may not shut him up in an out-house and set a guard over him. She sought, groping, for ways and means, and a thought came to her. A single day gained meant time for reflection for the perfecting of a plan.

"Do you," she asked, quickly, "like flowers? Would you care to help me with my garden for a day or two—only a day or two? I need a man to help me." The tramp looked up in mild astonishment, but she hurried on.

"It wouldn't keep you long from your—from your other occupations," she said. "Only a very little while, and you would have plenty to eat and a—a comfortable bed, and when you—go away, I will give you—ten dollars—twenty, if you like."

The little man fumbled at the Russian hound's ears, and the always-ready, deprecating laugh broke from him.

"Why—why, yes, ma'am," he said. "Yes, I likes flowers. They're so pretty and gaylike, but I—ain't much good, ma'am. I haven't never worked regular. I don't know." His eyes turned down the shaded lane towards the distant highway.

"And I—I expect I'd miss the Road, ma'am," he

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said, a bit wistfully. "It gets into your blood surprising, the Road does. There's such various and sundry things might turn up just round the next bend—and generally does. I'd miss the Road."

"Only for a day or two," she urged.

"You see, ma'am," said the little gray man, "I'm nothing but a hobo, and I'm very fond of the Road. Kansas, he has a song about it. He says he didn't make it up himself, but I expect he did, Kansas being a gentleman once and very educated. The song goes:

"For to admire and for to see,
For to be'old this world so wide—
It never done no good to me,
But I can't drop it if I tried!"

There's more to the song, but I've forgot. I ain't no good at remembering. You see, ma'am, it's like that. I'd be wanting to get out on the Road again."

"Only for a day or two," she urged again, and the little man rose with a sigh.

"I'd like the ten dollars," he said. "I mean twenty," and stood hesitating and shuffling his feet.

Béatrix rose quickly and led the way along the lane towards the inner gate, and the man followed her with lagging feet. The Russian hound marched solemnly at his heels. As they reached the house and skirted one wing of it to enter the gardens, she watched his face, but there was no sign of recognition or of that old bewilderment. He seemed merely uneasy and half inclined to flight, a little frightened.

To the old Scots gardener she said that this man had been sent to her by a friend, with a recommendation; that he wished work, and that she would like to have him made busy among the flowers.

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"I will have that little hut down below the green-houses prepared for him," she said. "And—do not be hard with him at first. He is old and—and not too strong. Do not overburden him."

The Scotsman looked upon the new-comer with ill-concealed disdain.

"I doot if he's up to much for wark, mem," he grumbled. "But I'll set him at the watterin' and such. He'll be better than naething belike."

Apart she said: "Watch him. Do not let him wander away. His head is not—not quite right. In a day or two I shall make other arrangements. Understand. For the present he is to be carefully guarded."

Then, since she felt that endurance was almost at an end, she went into the house, and, with slow steps, up the stairs to her own chamber. There in the cool, darkened room she dropped upon her knees beside the bed and laid her face upon her bent arms. Sobs began to shake her very bitterly.

"Oh, God!" she cried, in her agony. "God, if You will hear me still, if You're not turned from me quite, help me now! I have done a very terrible sin—for love's sake—and I deserve punishment, but do not punish me now! Afterwards, when I'm dead, do what You like with me. I sha'n't beg off. I sha'n't shrink. But do not punish me now. Help me to keep this dreadful thing from Harry Faring. Help me to make his life happy. Help me to hide from him, somehow, what must be hidden. Help me to lie and pretend and make believe so long as Harry lives. Then you may torture me forever if You want to. Show me a way to prevent this horror from reaching him. That's all I want. I want his life to be beauti-

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ful. Oh, God, if there's any kindness or goodness or mercy in You, You'll do this thing for me—I mean for Harry. Harry has been blameless. Do not let my sin cloud his life. Show me a way. Show me a way."

II

THE ROOM OF THE OLD GODS AGAIN

SHE saw no more of Buchanan that day, for she remained in-doors, locked in her own chamber, all the afternoon and evening, taking no food, repulsing the anxious, kindly maid who came from hour to hour to knock at the door.

And the God to whom she prayed so desperately held aloof—would send her no sign, show her no way.

"He'll have none of me," she said to herself at nightfall. "He's done with me. He will not hear." Then she shut her teeth and prayed again, almost with threats.

"You've *got* to help!" she said, fiercely. "You've got to let me save Harry Faring. If You don't I shall know that all the talk about 'mercy' and 'forgiveness' and 'long suffering' is lies, lies, lies! Harry Faring has done nothing to You. You sha'n't punish him for what I've done!"

At some late hour of the night she fell into an uneasy sleep, crouching dressed beside a window, and, after evil dreams, wakened in the gray of the morning, white, hollow-eyed, unrefreshed.

And God still held aloof.

With her breakfast word came from the old Scots gardener that he wished to speak to her. She had

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him brought in, and the man's sour face was crimson with wrath.

"Ye maun rid me o' yon dodderin' auld eejit, mem!" he burst forth. "I canna' thole him anither day. The Lorrd may ha' made the puir loon witless, an' for that I hae peety, but the Lorrd or summat else has made him maleecious as well. He's juist past bearin'. I canna' hae 'm amang my posies. Ye'll hae tae cast him oot the gate."

"I will come out presently," she said. "Do nothing until I come. Only we must not be hard upon this poor man. He is not himself." And she gave a little, bitter, wry smile at the phrase. He was not himself indeed.

When she went into the garden later neither the old Scotsman nor the wreck of Herbert Buchanan was in sight. She walked down past the roses and past the still pool into the walled and hedged enclosure where old-fashioned flowers grew in an orderly tangle. Here she came upon a great watering-pot set heedlessly down, or in malice, upon a bed of spice-pinks. The odorous little blossoms were crushed flat under its heavy bulk. She gave a cry of angry protest, and dragged the thing out into the gravel-path.

The Russian hound came whining and barking joyfully to meet her. The beast was as evidently hurt in feelings, if not in body, as a human being could have been. Every attitude bespoke indignation. Then on the farther height, the hillock where Phryne looked over garden and sea, some one moved, and Béatrix, the dog at her heels, went up the mounting path to the little open pavilion.

Herbert Buchanan sat there staring out across the rugged moor to where blue waves curled crisp under

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the morning sun. He rose politely when he saw her approaching, and pulled off his battered Panama hat. The old smile beamed ever from him, deprecating, apologetic, asking pardon, as it were, for his cumbering of the earth. Surely there could be no malice in the man, nothing but a foolish, witless good-nature.

"The gardener," said Béatrix, "seems a bit disturbed. Did you not get on well together? Of course, I understand that the work is new to you."

"Why, yes, ma'am," said Herbert Buchanan. "Yes, ma'am, we gets on fine. He seems to be a sort of a cross old man. He doesn't like it when I has to step on the flowers sometimes; but we gets on fine. Oh yes, ma'am. And that little house that you gives me, all by myself, that's fine, too. I don't know when I sleeps better than I sleeps there last night. I doesn't cough so much when I sleeps in a proper bed. It ain't so damp-like."

The Russian hound thrust forward a suspicious nose, and the man put out one of his hands towards it, but the dog at once drew back growling, and retreated behind its mistress's skirts.

"Why, what is the matter?" she cried. "Why should Sergei act like that? Yesterday he seemed so friendly towards you." The dog continued to growl, and she soothed it with one hand and spoke to it.

"Have you been hurting the dog?" she demanded, sharply. "Have you done anything to him?"

Buchanan broke into a little, tittering laugh. "I haven't done nothing to him, ma'am," he said. "I only kicks at him a bit to see him growl. He growls so ridiculous. And I puts a bit of pepper on his nose when I has my breakfast this morning to see if he'll sneeze. I haven't hurt him none."

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Béatrix shut her lips very tight. Was this the only thing left of that Herbert Buchanan who used to be—this instinct to harm things, to torture, to inflict hurt?

She sat down upon one of the curving benches which were there and fell into a brooding silence.

What to do?

"God has turned from me," she said. "He has done with me. He will not help. I must work alone. What shall I do?" Blindly she clung to her early decision. The man must be kept under her eye. He must not be lost. What was to be done further she did not know. No plan offered itself, and her mind was an aching darkness. She had thought once of an institution, an asylum where Buchanan might be cared for and guarded, but there was danger in that—the previous examination by keen medical men, possible discovery and the consequent ruin of all things. She abandoned that scheme. It was not safe. And yet no other presented itself.

Meanwhile something within her, morbid, unsatisfied, exigent in the face of peril, stirred her always to delving into that wrecked and shattered mind. How much might he be forced into remembering? What were the possibilities of recollection coming again to him, full, unimpaired? It was the same instinct which drags a murderer back to the scene of his crime—dares him to court suspicion and possible discovery.

She turned her slow gaze to the man beside her, and he looked back, blinking amiably, the foolish smile spreading across his wizened face.

"I think I shall walk across the hills," she said, "to a house just out of sight yonder—a house in which I used to live. It is not far—two miles, possibly. Would you care to come with me?"

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"Why, yes, ma'am," said Herbert Buchanan. "Yes, ma'am, I'd like to do that. I don't like being still in one place for very long. It's foolish. There's so many places to go to, and all different. Yes, ma'am, I'd like very much for to go."

"Come, then," she said. "We will go at once."

They went back down the little hill and through the gardens, for Béatrix had to stop in at the house to get a hat. At the garden porch she came upon the doctor from the neighboring village, a bustling, cheery man, small and round and pink cheeked. He had called to dress an injured arm for one of the maids. He paused a moment to greet Mrs. Faring and say something polite about her garden. Then he hurried out to his waiting dog-cart.

Béatrix let him go a few yards and called him back.

"Oh, just a moment, Dr. Cripps," she said.

The man turned back with alacrity, pleased to be spoken to, for he stood much in awe of Mrs. Faring. Privately he considered her the most beautiful woman in existence, and, in his humble, harmless fashion, worshipped her as one might worship a lovely and very regal queen—from a great distance.

"Anything further that I can—that I can do, madam?" he said, going a little pinker and gazing up at her from the path below. It was not what he had meant to say. He was always thinking afterwards of well-turned phrases which he might have used to her—phrases fit for her splendor, but face to face with her he was ever a stammering imbecile.

"You—you are perhaps a little pulled down by the heat?" he ventured when she did not at once go on, but only stood frowning out over his head. "Not quite yourself, perhaps?"

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"No," said Mrs. Faring, "I am quite fit, thank you. It is about some one else that I wished to ask you. A friend has sent a man to me asking me to give him work. I am troubled about him because he has a bad cough—very bad, I think. Perhaps he ought to have medical attention. Could you examine him for me, as a *very* great favor? I know you are very busy," she said, smiling down upon him—(Busy? He would have let the entire country-side die of typhoid fever for that smile!)"—"but I am troubled about this poor man."

"Yes, yes," said the little doctor. "Dear me, yes! To be sure. 'Busy'? Not at all. I am never too busy, dear lady, to—to—ah, that is to say— Where shall I find this good man? Ah, yes, yes. Here we are." He caught sight of Herbert Buchanan standing near, enveloped, as always, in his foolish, beaming smile, and made for him with a cheery greeting.

The tramp dodged suddenly and held up one arm, bent at the elbow.

"I haven't done nothing, sir," he said. "Honest, I haven't. I only wanted a few cents to buy—I mean, I was just agoing for a walk with that beautiful lady up there. She'll tell you I haven't done nothing."

"It is quite all right," said Béatrix from the porch. "This is a doctor—a very good gentleman who is going to try to cure your cough. Go with him, please, and answer all he asks you. I will wait for you here."

The tramp gave one half-frightened look about him and went, hanging uneasily back.

In five minutes they returned, and the little doctor shook a grave head.

"It is consumption, of course?" asked Béatrix Faring.

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"Oh yes," he said, "and bad at that. Very bad. He's living with about half a lung, and the general health is poor—anæmic; improper food, I take it, and exposure and all. The poor fellow cannot last long. He is badly broken."

"Perhaps," she said, and in her tone Cripps, the worshipping, heard only pity and kindness of heart. "Perhaps if he were sent to a drier climate—Arizona—the Adirondacks?" She held her breath.

"Dear lady," said Cripps, with emotion, "you have—may I venture to say it?—a heart of gold—gold! But this poor old fellow is beyond what you would do for him—what any one could do for him. Comfort, good food, a decent bed, that's all you can do now. Let him go down as easily as possible. He can't climb. A strange type, bewildered mind, clouded memory. Doesn't remember whether the disease is hereditary in his family or not. Doesn't remember any family at all. Almost deranged, I should say."

"Yes," said the divinity, in a sort of whisper, and for an instant an odd, bleak look shadowed her face.

"Perhaps," she said, half whispering still.

"Ah, what a heart! What a soul! What sympathy!" thought the prostrate Cripps.

"Perhaps," she said, "one ought to help him there also. Perhaps an operation—trephining—something to restore the poor wretch's memory. It may be due to a physical accident. He could bear an operation? Yes?" Again she held her breath.

Cripps was overcome. This was going almost too far, was wellnigh quixotic—but what a heart! He shook his head.

"Out of the question, dear lady," he exclaimed—"out of the question. In the first place, there is no

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reason for believing that any operation could restore this man's memory—doubtless the loss of it is merely due to failing powers; and in the second place, he could not endure any sort of an operation at all, even a minor one. He is at a low ebb—a low ebb."

He smiled admiringly up into the still, white face above him.

"If this poor fellow is so fortunate as to recommend himself to your pity, dear lady," said he, "believe me you can do nothing more helpful for him than to smooth his downward journey. Again I say, he cannot climb."

Somehow the good little man must have made his embarrassed adieux and got himself away, but Béatrix did not know when he went. She awakened to her surroundings only when Buchanan came sidling nearer and coughed to attract her attention.

"When was we agoing to take that walk, ma'am?" he asked.

"Walk?" said she. "Walk? Oh yes; to be sure. We are going to the lodge. Yes, I am quite ready. Come along. We go this way."

They went, not by the high-road, but by a shorter, more direct route along shaded lanes and paths, and, part of the distance, across an open moor, and at last approached Buchanan Lodge from the direction of the sea. The house was in charge of caretakers. Though excellent offers had been made to her, Béatrix had always refused to sell it. As for living in it, that was impossible. The place held too many bitter associations. The very sight of its walls made her shiver.

What she meant eventually to do with the estate she had never decided. There had been no will, and

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Herbert Buchanan had no kin. He was the very last of his family. For the present, the house stood empty, and the invested fortune, in the hands of a trust company, earned its very respectable dividends and increased after its kind, but the money went untouched.

"I will have none of it," Béatrix said more than once to her lawyer. "Oh yes, I am a fool, if you like, but I could not touch it. It would burn me. Harry and I, between us, have much more than enough of our own."

Half-way between the greenhouses and the west wing of the lodge, the lodge's master, bent and wizened and gray, halted, and passed an unsteady hand across his eyes.

"It's very queer," he said, in a sort of whisper. The foolish grin was gone.

"What is queer?" asked the woman, and watched his face.

"It's—it's the things I tells you about a-wheeling and a-spinning in my head, ma'am," said he. He looked frightened and uneasy. "It's—I must have saw this place some time before," he said. "I don't know. It's very odd."

And once more, as they slowly crossed the stretch of turf, he said uneasily that it was very odd. And once he said that his head wasn't good to-day.

"I wisht I was out on the Road," he said. "I like the Road. I wisht I was there, a-shuffling along in the dust with Kansas. Kansas's the finest pal a man ever has, ma'am, and very good to me."

At a door in the servants' quarters they rang up the caretaker's wife, a faithful old woman, brought with her husband and son from that Connecticut vil-

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lage where Béatrix had spent the winter. The woman let them in, exclaiming with pleasure over her mistress and looking rather askance at her mistress's shabby companion.

"We should like a drink of water," said Béatrix; "and then I wish to go into the west chamber—Mr. Buchanan's former study. You need not come. I have a key to the door of the passage. This man, my gardener, will go with me."

They drank the cool, fresh water the woman brought them and went through darkened rooms, where the shrouded furniture stood ghostlike in the shadows, to the narrow passage which connected the detached chamber with the house. Béatrix opened the door with her key and they entered that high, dim place where the air reeked faintly of dead incense and smoke-stained fabrics and antiquity; where contorted monsters grinned from the gloom above, and the old gods sat a-row smiling, imperturbable, waiting with deathless patience for the centuries to pass and their own to come to them again.

Sufficient light came slanting down from the small clere-story windows where there were neither shutters nor blinds, and in its dim glow the great room stood as it had stood two years and more since. Nothing had been moved or altered in position. No hand had been there, even to sweep or clean, and a thin film of dust lay over the great Byzantine table in the middle of the chamber, and over the things which were littered upon it.

The wreck of Herbert Buchanan moved slowly towards the centre of the room—towards the great table. He faltered as he went, one hand held out before him as if he were blind, and he muttered

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under his breath. The woman drew back into the shadows.

For a little while Buchanan stood before the table, with his head bent, quite motionless and silent. Then he went to one side and dropped down into the arm-chair where he had used to sit through so many hours of lonely gloom. His hand went out and played aimlessly among the things on the table-top—decanters and pipes and glasses and such. Presently, as if some memory came to the man, the hand dropped and fumbled underneath. There was a clicking of electric switch buttons, but the power had long since been turned off from the house and no lights sprang out flower-like among those far shadows.

He seemed to feel that something was wrong, that something ought to happen, for the hand fumbled again among the clicking buttons and he muttered unintelligibly to himself. Then, after a little, he shook his head and sank back in the deep chair, chin on breast, staring before him.

As on a certain other far night it chanced that, as he was turned, he faced one of the ancient gods who sat against the wall—Buddha, in gilded bronze, the dull gold gone in patches from the worn surface; Buddha, seated upon a lotos cup, head bent forward a little, faintly smiling, sphinxlike, enigmatic. And it must have been that in this moment the clouds thinned a bit, parted for a space, and a ray of memory filtered through. The man stirred in his chair, and a sudden flush of anger swept across the white face.

“Oh, for God’s sake, stop grinning there!” he said, aloud. It was the voice of Herbert Buchanan.

“I tell you,” he said, thickly, with difficulty, as if that voice did not come easily to his tongue—“I tell

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you I can't bear it any longer. I want to be free—I want to—I want to go out and tramp the earth—breathe—air—I—answerable to nobody. My nerves are drawn to—drawn to fiddle-strings."

He snatched up a book from the table.

"For God's sake, stop your damned grinning!" he cried, and made as if he would hurl the book at that still, oblivious god, but the book dropped weakly from his hand and fell to the floor, fluttering its open leaves.

He began again to mutter half under his breath. The voice was still Buchanan's, dropped to a weak, complaining, whining tone. Sometimes it quickened to a flare of anger, sometimes died away altogether. But presently the woman, watching from her shadows, tense, tight-lipped, still, became aware that he imagined himself to be talking to some one across the great table.

To whom? Who had sat with Buchanan on that night of mystery? Her mind flew to his words in the lane, what time she had striven verbally to reconstruct this scene. "Then *he* came in by the window." Who? Who? Had he not gone alone, then? Had some one taken him out into the night and into oblivion?

The man in the chair gave a sort of animal-like cry of desperation. "Too cowardly to live!" he said, with great bitterness. "Too cowardly to die! What—what remedy can you offer for that, my house-breaking friend?"

"House-breaking friend!" said the woman in the shadows.

Buchanan sat for a time silent, as if he might be listening. Then he turned in his chair, half rising,

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with his hands on the table's edge and his head craned forward over them.

"My God!" he cried, in a whisper of unspeakable amazement. "My God!" He dropped back again and sat staring before him. Then presently he rose to his feet and began to walk back and forth, with his hands behind him. The woman drew back farther into the gloom. Once she saw his face, and it was white and tortured. There was mind there, thought, intelligence. The vacant smile of the little gray tramp was gone. He wrung his hands, and his lips drew tight and writhed.

At last he nodded strongly once or twice and said something which was inaudible. He went across the room towards a tall Japanese cabinet which stood there and fumbled at it. He seemed at a loss, and moved about uncertainly. Then he went again towards the centre-table.

"Come!" he said. "Off with us now! Good God, must we wait here forever? I'm sick to be gone." He waited a moment as if that other invisible presence were speaking, and his face flushed.

"Let 'em think what they like and do what they like!" he cried. And the woman gasped in her hiding-place, for these were the very words she had heard him use in her dream.

"For once," he said, sneering, "I shall be of interest to my friends—for the first time." He moved quickly across towards the farther side of the room, and the woman followed. He went to one of the windows and pulled at it with his hands. Then once more he faltered and seemed to be at a loss.

"It—it ought to be open," he said, in a different voice. "You left it open, didn't you? It ought

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to be open. How—" He tugged at the fastenings again, muttering uneasily, but his hands dropped and he turned about towards the woman who stood behind him. His face was almost contorted with anxiety.

"Let me," said Béatrix. "Let me." She wrenched open the bolts, and the two halves of the window swung inward, admitting a sudden, garish flood of daylight.

Buchanan staggered backward a step with a quick, hoarse cry, and caught his shaking hands up over his eyes.

And in the same instant the cry was echoed from outside the window—a gasping cry followed by a name—"Buchanan! Buchanan!"

III

THE MAN WITH THE BLUE EYES

BÉATRIX, who had drawn back as she pulled the bolt of the window, leaned forward again over Buchanan's shoulder. A man stood on the turf below the window in the little patch of shade which was cast by an angle of the building. He had covered his eyes with one hand and the other hand groped in the air. At his feet lay a short, strong implement of steel, not unlike a chisel. It would seem that he must have dropped this when the window above him was so suddenly thrown open.

The hand slipped from before his eyes and he looked upward, so that Béatrix saw his face. It was a face she did not know—a lean, pale face, with a short growth of black beard which came high up on the cheek-bones. But what the woman saw first was the eyes. She thought that she had never before met eyes so pale blue and so curiously hard and unwinking. They rested upon her for a long time, steady, unmoving, wholly without expression. Then Herbert Buchanan all at once gave a great shout and pushed past her to the window-ledge. He scrambled out, dropping to the turf below, and caught the man who stood there by the arm, laughing excitedly and crying out.

The man turned to him for an instant's quick, keen,

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searching look, and with one hand patted him on the side of the gray head as a mother might stroke a child just returned to her after an absence.

"All right, Johnnie? All right, eh?" he said, and Buchanan laughed again, childishly, and shook the arm that he held between his two hands. Then he turned his face upward towards the window.

"This is Kansas, ma'am," he said, with great pride. It was the little, bent, foolish tramp again. The recreated spirit of Herbert Buchanan had fled with the inburst of that flood of summer daylight into the chamber of the old gods—the chamber of mysteries.

"This here is my pal, ma'am," he said, "the finest pal a man ever had." He turned to the man beside him with a swift, stammering narrative of the things the beautiful lady had done for him—the wonderful food, and the real bed in the little house that was all his own, and the garden and the dog with the thin waist who growled so remarkable when you kicked at him.

But the man whom he called "Kansas" seemed to pay him small attention after that first odd, womanish caress. His hard blue eyes, unwinking, unwavering, without expression, never left the face of the woman in the window above. And the woman stared back curiously, with a vague, cold fear beginning to grow about her heart.

What did this man know? Why had he called out "Buchanan! Buchanan!" when his fellow-tramp appeared unexpectedly before him? An odd sense of peril came to her, an odd presentiment of impending catastrophe, and she shivered in the warm summer air.

"Why are you here?" she asked, presently. "What were you doing outside this window?" The hard blue eyes did not stir from hers.

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"I was looking for a door, ma'am," he said, readily. "I rung and knocked at one door in the other part of the house yonder, but nobody answered. I thought, maybe, there was a door hereabouts."

"And *that*?" said she, pointing to the steel instrument which lay at his feet.

"That ain't mine, ma'am," he said, without emotion. "It don't belong to me. Some one else must have dropped it there."

"Why," said she again, "did you call out a name—'Buchanan'—when this window was opened and you saw your—your friend standing there? He tells me his name is John."

The man below continued to gaze at her, unwinking. There was not the slightest trace of expression in either his face or his respectful tone.

"They told me down the road a bit, ma'am," he said, "that a gentleman named Buchanan lived here. I was agoing to ask him for work. When I saw the window open so quick I was startled like, and I called out: 'Mr. Buchanan.'" He paused a moment, and then, still in his level, expressionless voice, asked:

"Beg pardon, ma'am, are you Mrs. Buchanan, ma'am?" She answered quite mechanically, taking no thought.

"*I was* Mrs. Buchanan," she said. "I am Mrs. Faring."

Then for the first time something flickered in the hard blue eyes, an odd, enigmatic look. The eyes dropped, and the man turned a little aside. He did not immediately speak again, but looked towards the gray tramp who stood beaming foolishly near by. And he looked down at his hands, twisting and turning them slowly before him. He had the air to be reflecting.

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"I was going to ask Mr. Buchanan for work," he said, at last. He spoke as if half to himself.

"Mr. Buchanan is dead," said she.

The man raised his eyes again slowly, and the woman was conscious of a dull anger that they should so baffle her, that eyes should be so wholly without expression.

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "To be sure, ma'am."

"*You* couldn't find something for me to do, could you, ma'am?" he said. "I'd like to have a steady job. I'm tired of starving and sleeping out in the rain."

"I'm afraid I have nothing to offer you," she said, coldly. "Besides, your friend, doubtless without meaning any disloyalty, has told me something of your ordinary occupation. One would hesitate, I think, in the face of that, to take you in."

The man gave a swift side look towards his smiling companion, but he did not hesitate.

"Johnnie doesn't always know quite what he's saying, ma'am," he said. "He don't always understand things. I wouldn't steal anything. You could set a watch over me if you wanted to."

"I can offer you no work, I am afraid," said the woman. There was a note of very definite finality in her tone, but the hard blue eyes did not stir.

"I'm tired of starving and sleeping out in the rain," said the man again. He spoke quite unemotionally, but for some reason the chill about Béatrix Faring's heart grew colder, and it seemed to her that a hand almost physical began to press at her throat. She tried to look away, but the still blue eyes held her eyes and she could not.

"And Johnnie, ma'am," said the man, softly—

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"Johnnie, he's tired of sleeping out, too. He isn't very well, Johnnie isn't. He's got a bad cough. If Johnnie and me, now, could have a quiet place to live in and good food to eat and no more worrying to do, that would be very pleasant. Remarkable pleasant."

"It is impossible," said Béatrix Faring, in a shaking whisper. "Impossible. I could not think of it."

"Of course," the man went on, as if she had not spoken—"of course, Johnnie he isn't up to much for work, but I'm strong. I can do Johnnie's work while he lies about in the sun and gets strong again—as strong as he'll ever be. It would be very kind to take Johnnie in and make him comfortable in his old age; wouldn't it, ma'am? Of course, I'd have to come, too, because Johnnie couldn't get on without me. He wouldn't stay, it's likely. He'd be restless. You see," he said, passively, "me and Johnnie, we have been together a long time, ma'am, and we wouldn't like to be separated. Would we, Johnnie?" He turned to the foolish, smiling figure of the tramp, and Buchanan gave a little laugh.

"Oh no, ma'am," said he. "I couldn't never live without Kansas. Kansas is the finest pal a man ever had, and wonderful good to me."

"A long time," said the man with the blue eyes; "ever since Johnnie got—got his head hurt, and even before that, ma'am."

Béatrix Faring, standing rigid and still in her window, gave a low cry.

"Even before that," said the man, gently. "He's had a remarkably odd life, Johnnie has. Some day I'll tell you all about it, ma'am. You see, Johnnie was once—"

"Yes, yes," said Béatrix Faring. "Yes, I— An-

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other day you shall tell me. I do not know about the work. I will ask the gardener." She pressed her hands over her heart that was so cold, and a haze came before her—a colored haze. Through it she saw only two hard blue eyes that stared and stared and saw through her far down into her quaking, shivering, terror-racked soul. It would have been a comfort to scream, but she had no voice.

After a long time she said, with difficulty:

"I will see. You may come with me if you like, to where I live. I will see about the work. Wait for me. I will join you in a moment."

She swung the window shut with the last of her strength, and bolted it. And she turned with stumbling, groping steps to make her way out of that chamber of horrors. An infinite weariness lay upon her.

"He knows everything," she said to herself in the shadows. "Everything. And I am lost. Oh, Harry! Harry!" she cried, in despair, shaken with silent agony, "God has forgotten me, and I am all alone, and my sin has found me out. I shall lose you, Harry, after all!"

The grace of tears came to her and lay wet upon her face. But after a little she brushed them angrily away and drew a great breath.

"Not yet!" she said, defiantly, to the ancient gods who stared across at her, sitting a-row.

"I'm not lost yet!" she cried. "God has forgotten me, and I am all alone, but I shall fight until I can fight no longer. Oh, Harry, it may be that I can save us yet, for love's sake. It may be, Harry. It may be."

Then, locking the door behind her, she went out to rejoin Herbert Buchanan and the man with the blue eyes.

IV

BÉATRIX LOCKS HER DOOR

FARING returned home late on the third day after his departure. He was just in time for dinner—they made a habit of dining early, so that they might have the last of the sunset and the beginning of dusk in the garden—and Béatrix was waiting for him at the inner gate of the long lane.

His face went quite white when he saw her, for these three days and what had occurred in them had altered her terribly. He leaped down from the trap which had brought him and stood holding her hands, staring into her face, quite silent until the trap had driven on to the stable and the footman had taken his luggage into the house.

"What is it?" he said then, in a whisper. "Oh, Betty, what is it? What has happened?"

She broke into a dry sobbing, and hid her face on his breast, and in the circle of his arms she crept closer, pressing against him until he felt the sobs shake her from head to foot.

"Nothing, Harry," she said. "Nothing, nothing. Only don't go away from me again. I can't—really it's nothing. Believe me. But I can't bear being alone. Such things might happen. Don't leave me alone again, Harry."

Faring began a little, nervous, overwrought laugh.

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"I sha'n't let you go out of my sight again," he said. "I sha'n't go out of yours ever. But for a moment you frightened me horribly. Has it been so lonely, Betty? I—you know I haven't had such a very jolly time myself. If I weren't ashamed to, I should have bolted back home within twenty-four hours. Anyhow, I don't go alone next time. That's certain. Look up," he said.

She raised her face to him, and the joy of having him back, of again having his strength to cling to, the touch of him, the sound of his voice, were so powerful that, for the moment at least, that strain and fear seemed to have passed from her, leaving a glory in their place, and Faring laughed again—a laugh of relief.

"Ah, that's better," he said. "That's more *you*, Betty. You *did* frighten me."

"Hold me closer, Harry," she cried, in a little, fierce whisper. "Closer. I want to be hurt. I want to forget everything except that you're here again. Ah, never go away from me again, dearest. Never, never!"

They dined after a fashion—a rather silly, honeymoon fashion, such as early Victorian painters were so fond of portraying—and afterwards walked in the garden.

Down below the roses, in the walled enclosure of old-time flowers, the man with the hard blue eyes busied himself, not too feverishly, with a watering-pot, and Johnnie, smiling his amiable smile, looked on from the vantage of an overturned barrow.

"Hallo!" said Faring. "Who are those two? New gardeners?"

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"One of them is," said the woman, "the one with the beard. The other is a poor old man—a tramp, who is ill and worn out and cannot work much. He was sent to me by—" She started to say by Arabella Crowley, but there might be danger in that. "By some people up in that Connecticut village of mine," she said. "He has had a very sad time of it," she said, "and I want to make him comfortable for a while. You must let me, Harry. You mustn't stop me. It's a whim of mine."

Faring laughed gently.

"You shall have all the whims you like," he said, "and you shall follow them all out. The poor old beggar looks as if he needed a comfortable time. Jove, that's a nasty cough! Are you putting him up in one of the huts? Right."

He halted near the man with the watering-pot, and looked at him attentively, with a little frown, as if he were trying to remember something.

"I've seen you somewhere before, my man," he said, at last.

The man said "Yes, sir," civilly, and as Faring did not immediately go on, he continued:

"It might be almost anywheres, sir. I've been about a good bit."

"Ye-es," said young Faring, frowning intently. "I should like to know where. It's rather odd."

Suddenly Béatrix saw something come into the hard blue eyes. They seemed to widen a bit. Then for an instant they dropped, and the man put up one hand over his mouth. She imagined a smile there—a triumphant smile, very awful.

"I think I know where it was, sir," said the man, looking up again.

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"Yes?" said Faring. "Where, then?"

The man looked towards Béatrix, and she drew a quick breath.

"I think it must have been in Cape Town, sir, three years ago," said the man. "I was down from Mafeking just about then."

"Ye-es," said Faring again, slowly. "It may be. I was there at that time. I think I have seen you since then, though. It doesn't matter, of course."

"Yes, sir," said the man, looking still at Béatrix Faring.

She pulled at her husband's arm.

"Come, Harry," she said. "We're missing the sunset. Come." And they turned away. But Faring paused for an instant more beside the bent little gray man who sat smiling on the overturned barrow.

"Mrs. Faring tells me you have been ill," he said. "I'm glad she has taken you in hand. We shall have you right again soon, doubtless. But if I were you I'd keep in out of the night air. It isn't too good for coughs."

Herbert Buchanan made a sort of bobbing courtesy.

"Thankee, sir," he said. "The beautiful lady has been very good to me, sir. I feels fine, being fed so proper and so often and having a real bed to sleep in. I'm very nicely, sir, thankee."

Faring nodded cheerfully, and they turned away towards the foot of the garden where the path began to mount to Phryne's little hill of vantage. As they turned, Béatrix stumbled, and would have fallen if Faring had not caught her in his arms. She gave a small cry.

"It's nothing," she said. "I caught my foot. Come, we'll go on." She leaned a bit heavily upon her husband as they walked, and drew his arm close

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about her shoulders. Faring thought it was one of her many little expressions of tenderness, and when they had gone out of sight of the two men he stooped and kissed her lips. As a matter of fact, she had come very near to fainting. She had not realized, until it was over, how terrible a strain she suffered when Harry Faring stood face to face with what remained of Herbert Buchanan and spoke with him. She had brought the meeting about rather deliberately because it had to occur, but when it was over, when Faring turned away with a careless nod, the world went suddenly black before her eyes, and she cried out, and would have fallen but for her husband's arm.

Sitting up in the little open pavilion with his wife's head in the hollow of his shoulder, Faring looked out to the golden west, and the frowning effort at recollection again pulled at his brows.

"It annoys me to forget things," he said. "And it annoys me still more to forget people. Where have I seen your villanous gardener-man before? Those hard eyes of his are extraordinary. One would hardly forget them, I should think, and yet I vaguely connect him with something shady, but I can't think what. What's the matter with his left cheek, by-the-way? He lets his beard grow high up on the cheek-bones, but on the left side there's something like the beginning of a scar above the line of beard. If I could see him shaved now I should remember, I think. Let me see. A man with hard blue eyes and a scarred cheek. If only he hadn't that scrubby beard—"

Béatrix stirred her head uneasily on his shoulder, and he gave a little laugh and bent down over her.

"Hang beards and scars and blue eyes!" said he. "They're nothing to us."

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"No," said the woman, turning her face away. "Oh no, they're nothing to us, Harry. Let's forget them. They're nothing to us."

It seemed to her that her soul must be writhing and shivering. That golden, glowing splendor of the western sky darkened before her, and out of it two cold lights burned, hard lights, pale-blue lights, a pair of steady, unwinking eyes that watched and watched, never closing, never wavering, either by night or day.

"He knows everything," her quaking soul said to her. "Everything. When will he tell?"

Faring spoke to her. Some outward, mechanical, second self heard him and mechanically answered. Presently she became aware that this outward second self was engaged in an extended and varied conversation which it managed with surprising fidelity to life quite as she would have done it herself. Inwardly she stood alone with her naked soul and cowered before it, striving to cloak it from those hard pale eyes that stared and stared and laughed and bided their time.

This endured for, it may be, two hours. Then the night came down, black and damp, and a little chill breeze bore up from the invisible sea.

"We must go in," said the man. "You will be chilled through if we sit here longer."

They went, clasped, enlaced, as they were wont to go, save that Béatrix Faring's heart was a little heap of gray ashes instead of a passionate thing which shivered with joy. They went through the garden, where strange, odorous growths, night-transmuted, leaned towards them out of the gloom, and so on into the lamplighted house and up the stairs.

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In her own broad, dim chamber Béatrix turned to her husband and pulled his head down so that his face lay upon hers. And she gave a great sob, without tears, and pushed him towards the door which opened from her room into his. He kissed her and went, but behind his back he heard the door close sharply and the key turn in the lock.

He turned with a sudden exclamation. There had never been a locked door between them, nor even a closed one. He stood thinking for a moment, one hand on the door-knob. It occurred to him that Béatrix had been hardly herself all the evening—silent, distrait, preoccupied.

He went out of the room and along the corridor to her door, which the two had not closed in entering, so that it still swung half open. He knocked upon it lightly and went in. Béatrix was crouching upon the floor beside her bed, and her head was between her out-stretched arms. He called out to her gently:

"Betty! Betty!" And she rose silently and turned towards him. "You locked your door," he said. It was as if he had said: "You struck me in the face." "You locked your door, Betty," he said.

She nodded, looking away. "Yes," she said. "I know."

"But *why?* *Why?*" cried Faring, and put out his arms to her. "You've never locked me away from you before, Betty. Why?"

She came into his arms, but passively, without response, her head turned away over his shoulder.

"Oh, dearest," said he, "you must tell me what is the matter. You're very far from being yourself. I felt that something was wrong the moment I arrived, and I've felt it ever since. What is it, Betty? For

BÉATRIX LOCKS HER DOOR

Heaven's sake, can't you tell *me* if anything is troubling you? Must we hide things from each other?"

"Oh, trust me, Harry," she said, in a voice that was much sadder than tears could have been. "Trust me. I'm doing nothing that—that is unnecessary. I locked the door because I had not the heart to say what—what the locked door said so briefly. I hoped you'd understand, or misunderstand, or something, and not come back. The door must be closed, locked, for the present. And don't ask questions. Trust me. I'm doing only what I must do." She turned in his arms, facing him. "Oh, Harry," she cried, "if you think I am doing this for any light whim, if you think that my love for you is the littlest, littlest bit less or cooler, if you think that I can bear being away from you without agony, I think I shall die. You must trust me, Harry, and not ask me any questions."

"Trust you!" said he, with his face against her hair. "Trust you? I couldn't distrust you and go on living. But I wish—" He gave a sudden cry.

"Betty! Betty!" And he tried to turn her face up to his, but she held it against the strength of his hands. "Oh, child," he cried, "do I know what it is? Have I guessed it?" Poignant and joyful imaginings raced through his brain. "Is it *that*, Betty?" he said. "Are you going to make me even happier than I was before? Is it that?"

Béatrix stared blankly at him through the half darkness. Then she gave an exceedingly bitter moan and turned away across the room.

"Ah, go! go! Go, Harry!" she said, and once more dropped down upon the floor, crouching beside her bed and hiding her face between her outflung arms.

Faring took one step towards her, then he turned

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and tiptoed softly out of the room, closing the door behind him.

After a long time the woman stirred, writhing on the floor.

"I am stained and blackened from head to foot," she said. "That Harry should have thought—that! That I should let him think that!" She beat her hands together very miserably. "Shall I ever be clean?" she cried. "Shall I ever be free of lies and deceit?" Again, after another long time, she spoke. "And I did it all for love's sake, Harry!" she said. "All for love's sake! Are you going to turn from me like God when you know?"

V

JOHNNIE AND KANSAS MAKE THEIR PLANS

MEANWHILE little Johnnie and the man called Kansas had gone to their hut at the foot of the orchard down beyond the greenhouses. The hut was a tiny structure, a story and a half in height, with two connecting rooms below and a loft above.

The man Kansas lighted the lamp which stood on a table against the wall of the larger room, and then busied himself with filling his pipe from a paper of black tobacco. Little Johnnie sank into a chair, and a fit of coughing seized him and fiercely shook all his wasted, shrunken body. It was pitiful to see, but one would not have expected a show of emotion over it from that singularly emotionless individual with the hard blue eyes. However, the man really had, it would seem, somewhere within him something like a heart, which could be touched by the suffering of this wizened wreck whose fortunes he chose to share. He stopped with the pipe half-way to his lips and his face twisted as if he were in sudden pain. Then he crossed the room to the chair where Johnnie crouched, bent double with his rending paroxysm, and stroked the bowed shoulder as tenderly as a woman could have done.

"There, there, Johnnie! There, there, little man!"

And Johnnie, albeit with crimson face and starting

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eyeballs, grinned up to him, and presently, when the fit had passed, leaned his head against the other's arm, gasping and breathing hard till his feeble strength had come back to him.

"That was a nasty one," he said, whispering. "That there was a nasty one."

"Ay, Johnnie," said the other man, and went back to his pipe. "A nasty one it was. We mustn't let you stop out in the night air so late another time." He lighted his pipe and sat down in a chair across the room.

"That's it," said Johnnie, eagerly. "It's the night air does it. It's damp-like. Grrr! It hurts in the middle of my chest. There's something burns there, most remarkable bad."

The other man did not answer, but sat still in his chair, puffing great clouds of smoke, and, through them, staring very thoughtfully across the room. Suddenly he gave a short laugh quite without mirth.

"I've seen you somewheres before, my man," he quoted, with seeming relish, and laughed again, very grimly.

"Ay, governor, that you have," he said. "That you have. And it weren't in Cape Town, neither. Ho, ho!"

He fell silent once more, puffing great clouds of smoke from his pipe, but he seemed to be thinking busily, for at intervals that odd, mirthless laugh broke from him and he nodded his head. Whenever he laughed, little Johnnie, watching his face worshipfully, doglike, laughed also his vacant, meaningless laugh and shuffled his feet on the floor. The other man smoked in silence for a long time.

"It's come," he said, at length, staring into the

JOHNNIE AND KANSAS

cloud of tobacco-smoke as one who saw things there. "It's come at last, and, Gawd, it's come queer!"

"Most remarkable queer!" croaked little Johnnie from across the room.

"We'll just be agoing on soon, Johnnie, lad," he said. "We've had enough of tending little flowers and a-touching our caps when people comes near. We'll just be agoing on soon. Like that, eh?"

"Ay, Kansas, wouldn't I, just!" cried the bent little man, huskily. "It's so foolish-like, a-living in one place for days and days when there's the Road awaiting out yonder. I want to wake up with the sun shining comfortable in my eyes," he said, "and the little ants a-crawling over me. That's what I want."

"*And* your pockets full of money," said the man with the blue eyes.

Johnnie grinned with humorous appreciation of the jest. "I haven't never waked up just like that," he said. "I don't know where the money is a-coming from."

"Maybe not, little man," said Kansas. "Maybe not, but *I* do. Heaps and heaps of money we'll have. Money enough to bury yourself in, money enough to buy houses if you took a fancy to 'em. Money enough to be a gentleman, and never do nothing but go about throwing it away."

The other maintained the feeble grin of one pleased at a jest somewhat beyond his reach.

"I don't know," he said, doubtfully. "I haven't never had any money."

"Never, Johnnie?" said the man with the blue eyes. "Never?"

"No, never!" he said.

The man with the blue eyes leaned forward, pipe in hand.

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"Once there was a man called Buchanan," he said. "*He* had heaps of money.

Little Johnnie's eyes clouded, and he stirred in his chair.

"Are you agoing to begin that all over again, Kansas?" he pleaded. "It's all so damn foolish, and it makes my head go round and round so queer. I'd rather not."

The other man sighed, leaning back in his chair. "Never mind," said he. "It's no good, anyhow. You've forgot altogether, haven't you, little man?"

Johnnie shook his head gloomily. "I expect I must have knew such a man," he said, "because his name makes my head go round, but I can't remember, and I don't like to try. When are we agoing away? I don't like it here. My head's bad most of the time. I want to get out on the Road again."

"Very soon, Johnnie, very soon," said the man Kansas, nodding into the shadows. "It ain't quite safe here now, with that gentleman come back. I don't like the look of him. Some day he'll remember where him and me met before. He'll remember that it weren't in Cape Town. I'd like to be away then."

"You ain't afraid of him, are you, Kansas?" demanded little Johnnie, anxiously, and the other laughed.

"No, Johnnie," he said. "He's afraid of me—leastways he would be if he knew some things, and if he's ever afraid of anything, I wonder. But just the same we'll go in a day or two—to-morrow night, maybe, after I've had a little talk with your beautiful lady. No, I don't like the look of him. He's a bulldog, Johnnie. He'd never let go once he took hold." The man smoked for another long time in silence.



“‘SHE’LL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP IT QUIET,’ HE SAID, NODDING”

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"Easy, easy," he said, finally. "Easy as you like." He seemed to be speaking his thoughts aloud, forgetful of the man across the room. "She'll do anything to keep it quiet," he said, nodding. "She's frightened blue. Anything to keep it quiet. How much now, I wonder? Something down and something every quarter or every month. That's how."

Again he dropped back into his brooding silence of thought and smoke, and so continued for an hour or more, muttering to himself at intervals, shaking or nodding his head judicially.

Towards midnight he rose, stretching his arms, and looked across to where his comrade sat huddled against the wall, chin drooping sleepily upon his breast.

"Time for bed, Johnnie," said he. "You ought to have went long since. I was thinking things over, and I lost track of time. Off with you now."

Johnnie rose, blinking. "Maybe it's the last time we sleeps here," he said, rubbing his eyes. "I'm glad. I want to wake up with the sun shining in my face and the ants crawling over me, comfortable-like." At the door to the other room he turned and put out his hand, touching the other man's arm. "You're the finest pal a man ever had, Kansas," he said, as shyly as a girl. "I don't know what I'd do if you wasn't about."

Oddly enough a sudden flush came over the man Kansas's face. "There, there, Johnnie," said he. "Get along to your bed. You've sat too late already. I'll whistle up the dog to come in and sleep with you if they haven't chained him. Get along to your bed."

He opened the outer door of the hut and whistled twice. Something stirred in the darkness near by, and the great Borzoi, which had made such a demonstra-

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tion over the bent little tramp on the occasion of his first arrival, came into the light. The animal slipped quickly past the man, pressing against the door-casing, and disappeared into the inner room. The man Kansas stood for a moment looking after it.

"I wonder why that beast doesn't like me?" he said, aloud. "Animals never does. I haven't got time to play with them. That's it, I expect. Johnnie, he can kick that dog all over the shop, and pull its ears, and feed it pepper, and it still comes a-cringing and a-licking at his feet. If I should hit at it it'd eat me alive."

He stepped out into the odorous darkness where the cool night wind bore from the gardens, and he turned his face towards the north, where the house loomed black against a starlit sky. One upper window showed a gleam of yellow light.

"Still awake," said the man with the hard blue eyes. "A-plotting and a-planning and a-thinking, eh, and a-shivering, too, I'll warrant—a-shivering for fear. Ho, ho!" A sudden laugh broke from him in the darkness. "A-shivering for fear," he said again. "Eh, you'll shiver more afore we're done, me lady. Shiver and pay—shiver and pay."

He stood for some little time watching that lighted upper window, and then at last turned back into the hut, closing the door after him. He pulled a chair nearer to the table where the lamp stood and made himself comfortable in it. Then he took a book from the table, and, turning to a certain page which was marked by a slip of paper, began to read.

The book was *The Minister's Wooing*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

VI

KANSAS MEETS WITH A MISADVENTURE

ON the morning after this day, Faring came down to his breakfast at the usual hour. Béatrix was not in the breakfast-room, but that was not in the least surprising, for she was almost always late, not only at breakfast but at every other occasion. He waited a few minutes, and then, since she still did not appear, lighted a cigarette and went out upon the garden porch. There was a broad strip of turf between the porch and the first ranks of roses, and the man with the hard blue eyes was busy sprinkling this with water from a garden hose. The little gray tramp sat near, upon an overturned basket, busy with nothing.

Faring nodded, and the man with the garden hose touched his cap respectfully and went on with his work. The gray little tramp merely smiled, a deprecating, apologetic smile. Faring frowned towards the man with the hose. That odd, baffling, half recollection came again to him and roused him almost to anger. As he had said to Béatrix on the evening before, it annoyed him to forget people or circumstances, for he took a certain pride in a memory which was commonly accurate and unfailing.

"Somehow," he said to himself, "I connect him with something unpleasant—shady, or worse. And I

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don't like his eyes, either. He's a wrong 'un. I must get Betty to turn him out. He looks quite capable of thieving or anything of that sort."

Just then Mrs. Faring's maid came out on the porch to say that her mistress would not be down to breakfast, and begged not to be disturbed until lunch-time, as she wished to sleep.

Faring said, "Yes, yes, to be sure," but he was rather absurdly disappointed. He had lain on his back, still, open-eyed, staring into the dark and dawn all the long night through, thinking, wondering, exulting over this extraordinary and unparalleled splendor which had come to them to crown their joy, and he had said that in the morning they would talk it over together, would together rejoice and exult as two souls of such uncommon intimacy might well do. It seemed to his simple and inexperienced mind that it was none too early to begin with plans and preparations, since this glorious thing was manifestly quite outside previous human experience. But first of all he wanted to rejoice, to celebrate. He wanted Béatrix in his arms, her face against his. He wanted to tell her a great number of things which he seemed suddenly to have found words for. He wanted to tell her how very wonderful she was and how unlike any other woman who had ever existed, and he was bitterly disappointed to find that he was not to have the opportunity until afternoon.

He went in-doors very low in his mind and got through a rather sketchy breakfast, after which he wandered gloomily about the house and the garden. When he finally looked at his watch, thinking it must be near noon, it was a quarter to ten. He shook the watch and called it rude names. Then an inspiration

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came upon him. They lunched at two. That left something above four hours to dispose of.

"I'll go and see Aunt Arabella Crowley," he said. "Four hours — that's heaps of time. I can reach Red Rose in an hour and a half. That'll give me an hour to spend there. Somehow I think—I think Aunt Arabella 'd be a comfort. You can talk to her exactly as if she were a man."

He spoke to one of the grooms, whose duty it was upon occasion to act also as chauffeur, and the man began to pull the covering off the big Mercedes car. Then Faring went to the house, and, by a maid, sent word up-stairs that he was going to motor to Red Rose, but would return for lunch. By the time he had found his cap and goggles the Mercedes was ready, and in another moment he was off.

Behind a closed upper-story shutter, one white, with burning eyes and clinched hands, watched him go, and, quite hopelessly, prayed that death might smite her before his return.

Old Arabella received him with shrieks of joy. She was quite alone at Red Rose, for Alianor Trevor had deserted her to hide a stricken heart somewhere in regions unknown, and the Tommy Carterets were in Europe. So she was very tired of herself and inclined greatly to underestimate life in general.

"Thank God for even *you*!" she said, piously, to Harry Faring, "though the same God knows that there's no bearing you in these days. You and Béatrix are positively offensive. Get out of that smelly car and have it sent out of my sight. Steavens, the sort of whiskey that Mr. Faring likes. I think it's Irish—and a great deal of ice. And a lemon-squash with rum in it for me. Look sharp! Also, Mr. Faring will stay for lunch."

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"Oh no, he won't," said Faring, as he came up the steps of the porch. "He can't, really, Aunt Arabella. He's got to be back at home for lunch. I came over only for an hour. Betty has shut herself up for the morning, and that left me without occupation. You were the most amusing thing I could think of, so I came here. I killed nothing but a very messy hen on the way."

"As I have stated before," said old Arabella, wearily, "you and Béatrix are positively offensive. I have no patience with your billing and cooing and such. If only something would happen to you to make you interesting."

Faring began a little, uncertain, excited laugh, and he dragged his chair confidentially nearer.

"I'm—I'm none so sure, you know, Aunt Arabella," he said, "that—that something hasn't. I'm none so sure, by Jove!" And with many halts and stammerings and exclamations he told her what he thought he knew.

Mrs. Crowley was clamorous of astonishment and delight.

"How very clever of you both, Harry!" she said. "I'm sure I had never thought of such a possibility. Yes, and how very—er—prompt, so to speak. Almost indecent, I call it. Really, though, I'm frightfully pleased. It's exceedingly nice and wholesome and old-fashioned. So few people go in for that sort of thing nowadays. I can't think where the next generation is to come from—incubators, I dare say. Fancy that dear child with a child of her own! It's incredible. She was never very domestic by inclination. Of course she'll be quite silly over it. They always are. She won't even notice whether you're

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about the place or not. You may think she's fond of you, but just you wait a few months, my lad. You'll be wanting to murder that precious infant forty times a day like a tomcat, or whatever wretched animal it is that becomes jealous and eats its offspring."

"Jealous!" cried Faring, with his wide and imbecile smile. "Not I, by Jove! Not I, Aunt Arabella. Think of it, will you? Betty and I with a kiddie quite our own. By Jove, I—I can't be quiet over it! Just think of it, will you?"

Old Mrs. Crowley betrayed some slight signs of becoming bored.

"Yes, yes; quite so," she said. "Only don't you get into the way of thinking that nobody's ever had a baby before. Of course I grant you that nobody has ever had anything like such an altogether magnificent baby as this will be. Still— Well, what is it, Steavens?"

"The telephone, ma'am," said the man, from the doorway.

"Still, don't overexcite yourself quite so early," said old Arabella, getting heavily to her feet. "Drink your whiskey like a good little man, and don't go bobbing off among the clouds in that absurdly balloon-like fashion. I shall be back in a moment."

She returned laughing.

"How very pat!" she said into the depths of her lemon-squash. "It was Béatrix. No, no!" as Faring sprang to his feet. "No, I don't mean Béatrix in person. Just a message that her maid telephoned down. You're to stay here to lunch with me. Your affectionate wife means to keep her room all day long, and she doesn't want to be bothered."

The keen, kindly old eyes saw a sudden gloom

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darken the man's face, and she put out a protesting hand.

"There, there, lad!" she said, in a different tone. "Now don't you go manufacturing troubles for yourself. It's only a whim of Betty's. You're quite old enough to know that at times like this a woman is full of incomprehensible whims—ups and downs and little fits of temper. Humor her, my dear Harry, and take nothing to heart except that it's all perfectly natural and to be expected."

Faring laughed a little more cheerfully, and the old woman nodded approval.

"Ah, that's better," she said. "Now, if you've any sporting blood I will make a wager with you. I will wager a thousand dollars that it's a girl. I take that end because, being a man, you would, of course, like a son. A thousand dollars that Betty gives you a daughter. What?"

"Done!" said Faring. "Done, by Jove!"

And so, thanks to old Arabella's kindly skill, the two had a very merry luncheon together, and sat through the afternoon in the best of spirits. Faring went away at about five o'clock, and Mrs. Crowley waited with him at the porch steps while his car was being brought round from the stables.

"Now mind," she said, in final warning, "you're to ask Béatrix when I may come to see her, but you're not to tell her that you've said anything of all this to me. She might not like it."

Faring frowned anxiously. "I expect I shouldn't have told," he said, "but you know I—I couldn't keep it in, somehow. I had to talk, Aunt Arabella. I shouldn't have told anybody in the world but you, truly, but I had to have it out. I'll tell her some-

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time later on, not now. Good-bye! and—oh yes! thanks for being so jolly patient with me. Good-bye!"

Then, when he had covered a third of the distance homeward, a chapter of accidents began to waylay him. First it was a bad tire-puncture, too bad to be repaired on the spot, and he had to run at a snail'space into the nearest village and there leave the car. He spent three-quarters of an hour over this, and it was past six o'clock. The village was not on the railway, but he succeeded in finding a horse and a man to drive him the three miles to the nearest station. He could have driven right home, but that would have meant two hours at the least, and he thought he should manage it by the rail—there was a change necessary half-way—in an hour.

But here again fate warred against him, for something happened on the line ahead of the crawling train, and he sat still in fuming idleness while time dragged interminably past. It was seven o'clock when he left the train, and half an hour later when he came through the long lane, and reached the house.

A servant told him that Mrs. Faring was in the garden, and he went there at once without waiting to dress.

She was among the roses. He caught a glimpse of her white evening frock while he was yet far off. There was a certain rustic seat placed under what was to be, in God's good time, a rose canopy, and there she sat, her back towards the house, waiting. He walked cat-footed, thinking to take her by surprise, and he was very near before he discovered that she did not sit alone. At the other end of the rustic seat

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was the new gardener's assistant—the man with the blue eyes.

Faring drew breath to speak, but at that moment Béatrix, wringing her hands together, said, sharply: "For God's sake, name your price and have done! I can bear this no longer!" And he held his breath and stopped where he was, with fear shaking in him.

The under-gardener faced Mrs. Faring, still, unwinking, expressionless. There was no hint of insolence either in his bearing or, when he spoke, in his voice. His face, as always, had an odd, dead look, as if the motor nerves and muscles were out of play.

"It might be worth a great deal, ma'am," he said, gently.

"Name your price and have done!" said Béatrix Faring.

"You see, ma'am," he went on, unheeding, still in his civil, gentle tone—"you see, it might be worth a *very* great deal; with you married again and living so happy and all. It wouldn't ever do to have ghosts—*live* ghosts—begging your pardon, ma'am—come up nowadays and spoil everything. Oh no, that wouldn't never do."

The woman wrung her hands again silently. It would seem that she was beyond speech just then. And as with her, it would seem to have been with Harry Faring. A power not within him, far beyond his control, bound him hand, foot, and voice. He could not stir or speak.

"And me and Johnnie, ma'am," said the under-gardener, politely, "we're very poor. It would be fine if we was to come by money enough to keep us comfortable for the rest of our lives. Fine it would be!"

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"How much do you want? Oh, how much do you want?" she said, in a whisper.

"Why, I was thinking, ma'am," said the undergardener, "of maybe ten thousand dollars down now—cash, of course—and then a thousand dollars every quarter, sent to some good, safe place that I might name. If you thought that was all right, then Johnnie and me we'd go away very quiet, and you'd have no more trouble, never. It's worth it, ma'am—it really is."

A quiet of utter and abandoned despair seemed to fall upon the woman.

"And if I refuse?" she said.

"Why, then, ma'am," said he, "I should feel like I would have to blow the whole thing to *him*."

Faring saw his wife give a sudden great shiver of agony, and he strove madly to burst his bonds, but a paralysis held him fast. He could not stir.

"Such a sum," she said, "is out of the question. I could not get together so much money and—and no one know. It would be impossible."

The undergardener regarded her without emotion.

"I'm afraid you've got to, ma'am," said he. "I'm afraid there isn't any other way. You're very rich. You can do it, I expect. You wouldn't like to have me blow the game, would you, ma'am? And you a-living here so happy and peaceful!"

She rose to her feet, breathing hard.

"It is impossible, I tell you!" she said. "Impossible!" But the undergardener rose with her and moved a step nearer. His face was still and expressionless, but a sort of dark shade seemed to have come up over its pallor.

"We'll see about that," he said, in an odd, low tone. "We'll see about that, ma'am."

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He put out one hand upon her arm as she shrank before him, and, at the touch, Harry Faring's bonds were loosed from him so suddenly that he almost reeled. He passed his wife in two quick strides, and as he went he spoke to her over his shoulder. He said:

"Go into the house, Betty. Go into the house at once." Then he sprang silently at the undergardener's throat.

The man had no chance. He was taken quite off his guard, and, moreover, if he was afraid of anything in the world he was afraid of Harry Faring. He gave a quick little cry, and one hand went towards his pocket; but Faring saw it go, and struck the man heavily under the chin. He went over without a sound.

Then Béatrix screamed and caught at her husband's arm.

"Go back," said Faring, without turning his head. "Go into the house, Betty, as I told you!"

But she began to sob and to cry out upon him hysterically.

"You mustn't, Harry!" she cried, stammering. "No, Harry! Oh no, no! You don't understand. Oh, Harry, let him alone. Let him alone and come with me. I'll tell you everything. Ah, no, no! Don't touch him again. I tell you, you don't understand. Won't you listen to me? Won't you?" She wept on, calling out to him, pleading incoherently. But her husband did not listen; he did not even look back at her. He was watching the undergardener, who lay twisting among the broken roses.

The man got slowly to his feet. His face was very white and it writhed. He did not speak, but his hand moved again unsteadily towards one of his

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pockets. Then Faring took him by the throat and shook him. He was angry, in that still, dangerous rage which comes, under great provocation, to a certain type of man. He shook the under-gardener as if the man were a little child, and beat him with his free hand until his arms were tired. Then he flung him away, and the man fell half across the rustic seat and lay there still.

"And now," he said, "you will go. You will put your belongings together—if you have any belongings—and leave this place within the half-hour. If you are found here at the end of that time the men will lock you up in the stable, and I will send for an officer to arrest you." He turned about to where his wife stood with her hands over her face, and he said: "Come, Betty. Come into the house."

She dropped her hands, facing him in the gathering twilight.

"You have heard, Harry?" said she.

"Yes," he said. "Oh yes."

"Then," said she, "I can fight no longer. This is the end of everything. I have fought hard, Harry." She looked towards the man who crouched before them, lying across the rustic bench. "It makes no difference what happens now," she said, as if to herself. "This is the end."

She turned away very wearily, and they went up through the roses and into the house.

VII

TWO GUILTY SOULS TOGETHER

THEY went through the long dining-room heedless of the table spread and laid for dinner, heedless of the servants who stared at them and at each other, agape with curiosity, and they went at once without question or hesitation up to Béatrix's own room.

The last of the day came in through the row of westward windows and filled the place with a soft glow which was neither light nor darkness—an odorous, fragrant twilight out of which deep shadows grew and gloomed towards the far corners.

The woman moved towards an open window and stood there for a moment, staring out into the golden west. Oddly, one of her strange, little, whimsical fancies came upon her. She nodded to the splendid sky.

"It was only a cloud," she said. "After all, our throne was only a cloud. I might have known." She turned and faced her husband. "I do not know how much you heard, Harry," she said, quite without emotion. "Enough, anyhow, so that you must hear it all now. That little, gray, mad tramp who is dying of consumption is Herbert Buchanan. Herbert Buchanan is still living."

Faring put out a hand quickly and held himself by a chair.

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"Say it again, please," he asked.

"Herbert Buchanan is still alive," she said, patiently. "That little tramp who cannot remember, is he. He is dying of consumption, but he is still alive."

Faring raised his hand a little way from the chair-back and made as if he would speak, but his lips only whispered incoherently.

The woman took a quick breath. "I don't want you to misunderstand," she said. "I don't wish you to be—to be sorry for me—to think that I deserve pity, or—I want to put you right at the beginning. It is all due to me—what we have—what has been done. When I came home from Paris, when I saw that body which you thought was Herbert's, I knew it was not he. I lied deliberately."

"Betty!" cried the man, shaking. "Betty!"

"Yes, I lied," she said. "I wanted our happiness. I wanted *your* happiness, Harry. Of course you will not believe me—no one would; but it was that I thought of first and last and through it all, *your happiness*. I wanted to make your life beautiful because I loved you, and I had never brought you anything but suffering.

"I was sure that he was dead," she cried, and for the first time her voice began to show the strain under which she wrought. "Something inside me said so day and night. I was absolutely convinced of it. I was as sure as I was that he had deliberately gone away of his own accord that dreadful night. I was right about that, too. He *did* go of his own accord. I tell you I *knew* that he was dead, but I had to have proof or I could not marry you. So I—the chance came—a miraculous chance—an unbelievable chance

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—and I took it and tricked you. It seemed the only way.

"Oh," she cried, "I cannot make you understand how sure I was of his death. I thought it was God telling me in His own way so that I might be happy. Maybe it was. Maybe He did it so that He could laugh at me later as He has done. And so now, Harry, you know what I am—how unspeakably low I have grovelled. I tried to make you happy. I tried to steal happiness for us both, and, instead, I have utterly wrecked us. Cast me off, Harry, and have done with me. There is nothing else for you to do."

"Wait! Wait!" he said, covering his face. "Wait! Let me think. Give me a moment to think. I don't—I can't think connectedly. Give me a moment." He began to walk up and down the room, his hands clasping and unclasping behind him in a way he had. And the woman, standing by her window, watched him in a sort of apathy. A great surge of love and of passionate tenderness rose in her with an unbearable longing to soothe and comfort and protect, but her brain answered to it coldly, as if from an unfathomable distance. It seemed to her that she was dead and watching the sufferings of a man whom, alive, she had loved. The passion of the living woman came very faintly to her like songs heard from far away. The living woman she thought must be sorely rent and tortured to see her man so in agony, but for herself she was beyond pain—beyond all feeling save a thin, faint pity that life should be a thing so bitter.

Faring halted in his walk, and dropped into a near-by chair. He sat down, steadying himself by the arms of the chair, as if he were very tired or weak. And he made a little, pointing gesture.

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"Please go on," he said. "And won't you sit down?" There was nothing to be told from his tone, and, as he sat, his face was in shadow, so that told nothing either.

"No," said the woman. "I would rather stand, thank you. And there's not very much more to say, is there?" she said. "You know it all now, really. The rest is only filling in. I have lied and cheated and tricked you. I have wrecked your life. There is nothing more to be said. The fact that I did it in the hope of making you happy is worth nothing now. What I tried to do I failed in. So the motive is worth nothing." A sudden fit of dry sobbing clutched her. "Oh, Harry, Harry!" she cried out. "I did it for love's sake. Can't you see that I did it for love's sake? I had been so starved of love all my life, and you had, too. I wanted happiness for you and me so. I so longed for it, ached for it! And then—then when that telegram came—when I thought that Herbert's body had been found, I was— Ah, I cannot speak of that. The temptation was so cruelly strong. That very scar, Harry, that they made so much of. Herbert *did* have a scar on the inside of his arm—the same arm, but it was a different sort, quite different. I made up my mind all at once in the few minutes when they left me alone with that wretched unknown body. My hopes had been so high—so heavenly high! I wasn't strong enough to give them up and go back to the old, interminable waiting. Often I've told you that there was something weak in me, that my sense of right and wrong was muddled somehow. You laughed, but it was true—oh, very true! Do you want to know how true? Listen, then. If I had all this to live through again I should do it over again

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just as I've done it. I should take the same frightful risks for the same great gain or loss. I expect I'm very, very wicked. Oh yes, of course I'm that; but I'd do it. I'm not even sorry that I did it, though I would very willingly die by torture to save you one little moment of the pain you are suffering now. I'm as vile a thing as you like, my dear, but I've loved you more deeply than any other woman ever loved any one, I think."

For a moment she covered her face with her hands, but the man in his shadows did not move or speak.

"What more?" she said, after a moment, very wearily. "Oh yes. Then the other day you went away, and within an hour *he* came shambling in through the lane. I knew him almost at once. At first it seemed simplest and best that I should kill myself, but there was a chance that I might be able to keep the truth from you, and so long as there was the littlest chance I was determined to fight. It was the other man who wrecked me, the one you nearly killed a little while ago. Somehow he knows, I don't know just how. Perhaps he knew Herbert before Herbert had the illness or accident that left him what he is now. Anyhow, the man knows. He was trying to get money from me as the price of his silence when you came upon us a half-hour ago. And that is truly all. I cannot go into greater detail now. Don't ask me, please." The fit of sobbing threatened again to seize her, but she crushed it back. She pressed her hands very hard over her breast as if something hurt her there. Then she turned to the man who sat still in his shadows, and took a step nearer.

"And now, Harry, it is all over and done with," she said, and she managed a little white smile. "I've

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fought hard—oh, harder than you will ever know!—and I've lost, absolutely, disastrously. I know only too well what you think of such things as I have done. I know only too well how high you set honor and truth over everything else. Curse me, Harry, for wrecking your life. Tell me, if you wish, how vile and contemptible I am in your eyes and then I will go. Only—only—oh, Harry, do it quickly! Be quick, for I cannot bear much more than I have borne. I shall break down in a moment. Be quick, Harry! quick, quick!" She began to shake, and she swayed a little on her feet.

The light out of the western sky was by this time almost gone, and the shadows were darkening to gloom. Out of them she heard Faring stir in his chair, stir and draw a great, deep breath. Quite suddenly he rose before her. She could not see his face, but he moved forward. Then he put out the arms which had for three months bounded her world and his, and took her into them. She gave a little, sharp cry, which she thought was a scream, and she knew that he had forgotten how strong he was and was hurting her. Then for an unmeasured space she knew nothing more, because she had fainted quite away, and was hanging lax and heavy against Faring's breast where she had thought never to lie again.

Long afterwards, when she had come to her senses, the two clung together in the dark, and Béatrix wept, weakly, easily, like a little child.

"It is impossible, impossible," she said. "Oh, Harry, I am mad or you are mad, or this is not real at all. Think what I have done. *Think!* I have utterly ruined your life and mine—ruined it hideously,

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yet you hold me in your arms. One of us is mad, or both."

"Both, if you like," said he. "I do not know. I know only that I can't seem to care. What you did, Betty, you did for love's sake. Maybe we are wrecked—ruined. Oh yes, I suppose so. But in any case we're wrecked together, and I can't seem to care very much what happens so long as it leaves you and me together. Maybe I've something the matter with my morals, too, as you say you have."

"'Together!'" said the woman, in a whisper, and, as they sat in the gloom, pushed herself a little apart from him with her two hands. "'Together,' Harry! Why, you—you don't realize. He's alive. *Herbert Buchanan is alive!* He's my—husband." She began to shiver again.

"I don't care," said Faring, stubbornly, "if you have forty husbands alive. I won't give you up. I won't go away from you, and if you should try to go away from me I'd lock you up and keep the key. I won't lose you now. I can't."

She gave a great cry.

"Oh, Harry, Harry!" she said, "do you mean that? Do you truly mean that? You'd stick by me in spite of everything? You wouldn't cast me off now that you know what I've done?"

"Try to leave me and see," said the man, and at the little note of fierceness in his tone she cried out again and pressed closer to him in the dark. He drew her up until her face lay in the hollow of his throat as they had used to sit.

"Oh, my dear," said he, "shall you be the only one whose love is great enough to override law? Shall you shame me by loving the more?—Law, principle,

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honor? I cannot make their call ring very loudly. Love's so much the bigger thing. In the beginning, perhaps. I don't know. Now we've gone much too far to give each other up for any earthly reason or scruple. Neither of us could live, I think, without the other."

"It's horribly, hideously wrong," she said.

"Oh yes," said he, "it's wrong. I know, but it's inevitable. We can't stop now. We're two guilty souls, Betty, clinging together in the dark, but cling together we must for all time, whatever comes."

After a little spell of silence. "Ah, now, Harry," said she, very sadly, "now I have come to the lowest depths of my abasement. Now I am prostrate, indeed, to have brought you to this—to have made you what I am. If only you had cast me off, if you had cursed me and gone away I should have taken some small, miserable comfort for that at least I had not soiled you. I should have wrecked your happiness, but never your soul. Oh, now I am indeed prostrate!"

He fell to soothing her, whispering to her, his lips against her face.

"Never say that, Betty," he pleaded. "Oh, never say that! How comfortable should I be sitting apart on my cold height of self-righteousness while you wept in the shadows. A fine, generous, noble figure I'd be! Oh, my dear, if there's a just and pitiful God aloft yonder, as the books say, what would He have me do, do you think? In what regard would He hold a man who, having very solemnly sworn to cherish and love and protect a certain woman for as long as they two might live, should cast her off, holding his skirts aside, just because, for love's sake—for *his* sake—in a pas-

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sionate striving for his happiness, she had broken certain laws? Oh, my very dear, if there's a God who holds by faithfulness and constancy and the love of a man for the woman who loves him, He won't be very hard on my soul. And if the God we're told about isn't that sort of a God, I don't want any dealings with Him at all. I'll go it alone. So, Betty, don't feel low because I'm not a deserter and a blackguard."

Then, after they had been a long time silent, he said, bending his head over her as she lay in his arms:

"Betty!"

"Yes," said she.

"Betty," he said, "what do you suppose Adam said to Eve when they'd been driven out of the Garden and were sitting together like this, thinking it over?"

She gave a little, shaking, uncertain laugh in the dark, and she said:

"I expect he said, 'Now you've been and done it—just like a woman!—and it can't be undone, and so we'll—we'll just have to stick together and patch up some sort of a life the best we can.' That's what he said, I expect."

"Yes," said Faring, drawing her closer—"yes, I expect that will be just what he said."

And again they were silent for a long time, so long that Béatrix, overwrought, overstrained, worn out to the point of physical exhaustion, went off into a sort of doze and lay heavily still in the man's arms. She awoke from this with a violent start and a cry.

"I thought he was trying to take me away from you, Harry," she said, shivering. "I thought he had come for me."

"Hush, dear!" said Faring. "Neither he nor any

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one can take you away from me. We're together for all time, whatever may happen to us."

Then presently she sat up with a deep breath.

"We must look to the future," she said. "We must talk of what is to become of us. Is there still any way, Harry, in which we may be saved? I mean outwardly saved. Where we stand in our own eyes we know and we shall always know. Day and night it will be before us. Oh, we shall pay, dearest, we shall pay in full measure. But for our friends' sakes and for many reasons we must prevent this thing from being known if we possibly can. What is to be done?"

"I have been thinking," Faring said, "while you were still and asleep. I expect I must, after all, stop that man who knows from going away. He won't have gone yet, I am sure. He'll have waited for a last appeal, a last threat, maybe. I must stop him and make some sort of bargain with him. After all, it will not be for long. The other—the little tramp"—he could not bring himself to say "Herbert Buchanan"—"cannot live for a year, I should think. He is far gone already. Once he is—dead—the other man's hold upon us is gone. Of course he knows that."

He kissed her and put her from him, and rose to his feet. He struck a match and made two or three lights in the room.

"It is half-past nine," he said, looking at his watch. "I must go down at once. Shall I send your maid? You must have something to eat. We've had no dinner, either of us."

She shook her head. "I'll wait here," said she. "I don't wish anything to eat—not now. I must know first. Go at once, Harry. I'll wait here for you."

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He went out of the room, and the woman sat where he had left her, silent and still, her chin in the palm of her hand, her eyes glooming across the room towards the shadows which hung there.

In ten minutes he was back, and by the look on his face she knew.

"He is gone?" she said, in a whisper.

"Both of them," said the man. "Clean gone, without trace. No one saw them go."

Béatrix sprang to her feet and came to meet him, catching at his arms. The old terror, the old panic clamored from her eyes.

"You must find him, Harry!" she cried, and shook the arm her hands clung to. "Oh, you must find him and bring him back! While that man is abroad we hang upon a razor's edge. He would do anything. Have you seen his face, his eyes? Anything! You must find him."

Faring awakened suddenly from something trance-like. "Yes," he said, gently, "I must find him. He must not be left at large. I will go at once." He freed himself and moved towards the door. Then he paused and came back. He took her into his arms and kissed her mouth. "The grooms are out now searching the neighborhood," he said, "but I do not think they will be successful. The man is clever. I may be away for some days. I shall not come back until we are safe."

"Oh, Harry! Harry!" she said, under her breath.

"I think I should send for Aunt Arabella Crowley if I were you," he said. "She would like to come, and she will bear you company. You can say that I am in New York on affairs of importance."

"Yes," she said. "Yes. Perhaps I will do that."

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Oh, Harry, be careful! Do not take risks. He is very desperate, that man, and, I think, dangerous."

Faring shook his head. "He wants money, not blood," said he. "He is not dangerous. I rather wish he were."

Then after a little more he was gone, and she heard him speaking to his man in the hallway outside her door. Presently the voice was gone also, and she was left alone.

She stood where he had left her for some little time. Afterwards she moved slowly about the room putting things needlessly to rights here and there. She did not in the least heed what she was doing. Her head ached dully, and she put out the lights, thinking that they hurt her eyes. A silver flood of moonlight slanted in through the westward windows and lay in four great, oblong patches on the floor. They looked oddly like four white coffins, and the woman stared at them for a long time very thoughtfully.

"Four coffins!" she said, aloud. "For whom, then? One for Stambolof. He's dead and at peace, as he longed to be. And one for Herbert Buchanan. He'll need it soon. How soon, I wonder? Two left. One for Harry and one for me."

She tried to imagine what it would be like to lie in a coffin quite still forever, with fading flowers at her breast and her hands crossed. It seemed to her very peaceful and pleasant, and she wished that she were already there, for she was desperately tired.

"I am tired of everything," she said again, aloud. "It would be very nice to rest forever, never to have to speak again, never to fight and struggle and strain against odds for a little happiness. It is so much trouble to live."

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Her knees trembled under her a little with sheer fatigue, and she sank down upon the floor beside the bed and rested her face against its white covering.

Passion, tenderness, hope, all the varied interests of life are as impossible to an exhausted body as fear is. In such a state thought itself is wellnigh suspended.

"I am very, very tired," Béatrix said. "I do not think I care very much about anything."

The quest upon which Harry Faring had gone slipped faintly across her mind, but it came from far away. It could not stir her.

"He—won't—come back," she said, with pauses between the words. "Harry's gone—and he won't come—back. Poor Harry! Four coffins!" she said, her eyes upon those four long patches of moonlight. "One for Stambolof and—one for Herbert Buchanan. That's two. And one for Harry who won't come back. And one—for me. I think—I'd like to get into mine now, and—go to sleep."

VIII

THE LAST MOVE IN THE GAME

NEAR a certain ancient and long-deserted stone quarry — of which mention has already been made in the course of this chronicle — just where a broad reach of moorland up-sweeping from the sea meets the flank of a wood of firs, there is a one-roomed hut, deserted like the quarry, half in ruins, half overgrown with vegetation. Here, stretched, in lieu of a bed, upon a door upheld by two low trestles, little Johnnie lay coughing his life away, and the man Kansas watched beside him. On the other side watched also that Russian dog whose faithfulness neither kicks nor tormentings nor applications of pepper could overcome. It was the fourth night of their stay in the deserted hut, and it bade fair to be the last, for little Johnnie was very low indeed, far too weak to stand, and patently near the end of all things earthly.

From time to time a feeble paroxysm of coughing shook him, and after each of these paroxysms he lay like one dead, almost too far gone to gasp for the breath his racked lungs so sorely needed. From time to time, also, the other man bent over him and wiped his lips with a torn rag of pocket handkerchief. Each time he did this the Russian hound emitted a low growl of jealous disfavor, and pressed his cold nose

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against the hand which lay twitching by the sick man's side.

"How is it, Johnnie lad?" asked the man Kansas for the fiftieth time that night, and bent down to hear the whispered reply.

"I'm cold," said the little tramp. "My feet is cold, and my hands, too. I'm cold all over." This also for the fiftieth time that night.

The man Kansas turned away, and for an instant that still face of his worked oddly in the lantern-light. "I wish we could make you warm, Johnnie lad," he said. "I wish we dared to make a fire. If I was sure there wasn't nobody about."

He moved across the room, and the eyes of the sick man followed him weakly. He pulled the door open and stepped out into the night, closing the door behind him. It was coming on to rain. A fresh, warm wind came surging up from the sea, and it bore a rack of cloud before it. There was a moon in its wane; the silvery light came down in sudden splashes through that scud of flying cloud. The night bade fair to be very like a certain other night on this same moor, a night which the man who stood staring into the west had reason to remember. He did remember it, and he shivered. He stood for some time looking across the wind-swept land. He had the air of being deep in reflection. Then he turned and went back into the hut. As he went the first rain-drop struck his face sharply and he shivered again.

"We're going to have a fire, Johnnie," he said. "There won't be nobody about on a night like this. We're going to have a fire and warm ourselves."

There was a litter of broken shutters and odd bits of wood in one corner of the room. He took up an arm-

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ful of fragments and piled them skilfully in the rough stone fireplace. They burned well because they were old and dry. In the space of two minutes a great fire was leaping and roaring, and its hot glow was reaching to the farthest corner of the already warm little hut.

The sick man turned on his side so that he faced the flames, and he stretched out one clawlike hand towards them gratefully.

"Eh, that's good!" he said, in a whisper. "That's good, Kansas. I'm agoing to feel better now. That's just like lying in the sun. I can awmost hear the bees a-buzzing and those silly little crickets a-cheeping away. That's most remarkable warm and fine."

The other man nodded, smiling cheerily down at him, and fetched more wood which he laid beside the hearth. He made a round of the windows, assuring himself that the heavy gunny-sack which he had fastened over each was well in place and allowed no light to penetrate, then he came back to the fire and seated himself there upon a broken box within arm's-reach of the sick man. The Russian hound had crept closer to the other side of the hearth, and lay still, his muzzle between his paws.

Little Johnnie coughed once or twice, but the fire had warmed the ache of cold out of his limbs, and he fell into a doze, breathing stertorously. Also, after a time, the man who watched began to nod. He had been without sleep for three days, and almost without food. But he was a strong man, inured to hardship, and so there must have been some further, supplementary reason why his face had gone so white and drawn and haggard, and why he swayed on his feet when he walked. He moved and looked like a man

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exhausted. He nodded in the warm glow of the fire, and recovered himself, and nodded again. Presently all three, the two men and the Russian dog, were asleep, while the fire crackled and hissed on its stone hearth and the rain pattered gently on the roof.

There came a scratching at the door. The two men slept on, but the Russian hound, quick-eared after his kind, raised his head to listen. The scratching came again, and the dog rose silently to his feet and moved into the centre of the room. After a moment he growled. At that the man who sat asleep beside the hearth started up, blinking and rubbing his eyes.

"Did you speak, Johnnie?" he asked. Then he saw the dog standing with nose out-stretched, and his brows came down in an alert little frown. He took into his hand something which had lain across his knees, and rose to his feet.

The scratching came again at the door and the Russian dog barked.

"Shut up, you fool!" said the man Kansas, and stood considering.

"It's one of the other dogs that's tracked us here," he said, at last. "If it was men they wouldn't come a-scratching at the door; they'd break it in."

He waited a few moments. There came no more sounds. Then, walking on tiptoe, he went to the door and opened it. A gust of wind and fine rain beat into his face, but in the wet gloom he could see nothing. He took a step forward, holding the pistol well before him, and stood listening. Once he gave a low whistle, but nothing stirred or answered. He said: "Where's that damn dog?" And out of the darkness, to one side of the doorway, something sudden and swift struck the out-stretched hand which held the

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pistol. The weapon fell, clattering, and the man Kansas staggered back into the lighted room cursing aloud. One entered from the night and closed the door behind him. The Russian hound gave a little, pleased whine and licked the new-comer's free hand. The other hand was engaged.

"A little farther away, please," said Faring to the man, who stood nursing his bruised wrist. "Right across the room by the hearth. Thank you. Yes, you may sit down." Suddenly his eyes fell upon the sleeping figure stretched before the fire on its improvised bed, and he started forward with an exclamation. He said: "He's not dead? Not dead?"

The sick man stirred in his sleep, the stertorous breathing became for a moment more labored, and Faring stepped back.

"Ah, I thought he was gone," he said. He looked again towards the other man and his eyes narrowed. The man was crouching beside the hearth. His head had fallen back against the rough wall, and his arms were dropped weakly beside him, so that the hands lay palm upward on the floor. At first Faring thought the man was shamming, but with a second look he knew better. He had seen men at the end of physical endurance before. He pulled a flask out of his pocket.

"Here, catch," he called out, and tossed the flask across the intervening space. "Take a good pull at that; you're done up."

The man caught the thing clumsily, and his fingers shook and trembled over the stopper. He took a long swallow of the brandy, and another and another. After a moment he sat up, and a tinge of healthy color grew in his sunken cheeks.

"I was tired," he said. "I haven't had much sleep."

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Then for a little time there was a silence. Johnnie, stretched upon his broken door, slept restlessly; the man Kansas crouched apathetically in his place, awaiting, it would seem, the next move; and Faring, from the centre of the room, watched the two. The Russian hound had gone back to his former position before the fire, his muzzle between his out-stretched paws.

It was Faring who spoke first. He laid the pistol, which he had been holding, across his knees, and settled himself more comfortably in the broken chair which he had dragged out from a corner.

"Now," he said, "we'll talk it over."

The man by the hearth looked up. With the return of strength which the stimulant had lent him he seemed again to have taken on his old manner. He gazed across the little room, still, unwinking, without expression.

"I was perhaps hasty," said Faring, "in ordering you away from the place the other evening. It might have been better to have had our little talk then instead of postponing it until to-night; but I conceived that you were insulting my wife; so I thrashed you. I am glad I did that."

"Your wife?" said the man by the hearth.

"Yes," said the other man, "my wife."

The man Kansas turned his head slightly and looked at little Johnnie.

"Johnnie's got a wife somewheres about, too," he said, without emotion. "Maybe you know Johnnie's other name? It's Buchanan—Herbert Buchanan."

"That," said Faring, "might be difficult to prove. Herbert Buchanan went away a long time ago. His body was found and identified some time after."

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"There's some things," observed the man with the blue eyes, "that don't have to be proved. They raise hell enough if you just says them without proving. Sometimes people is willing to pay a great deal not to have such things talked about."

"Yes," said Faring, "sometimes." He leaned forward, smiling. "The awkward thing about your position," he said, pleasantly, "is that your weapon can't last long. In a few days—a week—a month at best—perhaps even to-morrow—you'll be empty-handed. Poor Buchanan yonder won't see many more days. I have had some experience with such matters, and I should think he has a good chance of dying before morning. He's very low."

The other man sprang up with something almost like a scream.

"That's a lie!" he cried. "That's a lie! He isn't agoing to croak. He's only tired out. That's a lie!" He dropped upon his knees beside the sleeping little tramp and felt for his heart with one hand. The Russian dog growled at him and backed away snarling, but he paid it no attention. He bent over the wreck of Herbert Buchanan, and his face was drawn and contorted with rage and fear and love—unmistakable love.

Faring gave an exclamation of astonishment. "Why, I believe you're—you're actually fond of him," he said. "I thought the attachment was purely—er—business-like."

The man looked up at him malevolently. "What's that to you?" he said. "And he ain't agoing to die, neither. I've seen him like this before. He's only tired. Sometimes he gets very tired, and it lasts for a week."

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The little tramp turned on his couch and began to cough. Either he was very fast asleep and did not waken, or else he was sunk in a kind of stupor, for his eyes remained closed, only that dreadful paroxysm rent and tore at his lungs, and his hands beside him twisted and shook, and he fought for the small breath that was left in him.

Faring sprang to his feet, for he believed that the man was dying.

"The flask!" he cried out, sharply. "The flask I gave you. Get it quickly. And some water. Look sharp, man! He's going!"

The man Kansas stood white and helpless, but Faring thrust him aside and snatched up the half-emptied flask from the floor where it had been dropped.

"Get some water," he said. "Come, my man. Come! Pull yourself together! Have you no water in the place?"

The other man, moving like one in a daze, brought a rusty tin cup half full of water. Faring poured a few spoonfuls of the brandy in it, and, kneeling down, held the cup to Herbert Buchanan's writhing lips.

"Raise his head," he said to the other man, and Kansas, after a moment, kneeling on the other side of the rough couch, raised the sick man's head in his arms until Faring was able to force some of the liquid between the set teeth.

The coughing died away in slow gasps, and the struggle for breath calmed also until the little tramp once more lay still, breathing hoarsely, but for the moment, it seemed, well out of danger. The two men knelt on beside him for a little space watching, and the dog whined uneasily in the background. The

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man Kansas rose to his feet first and moved away into the centre of the room. From there he spoke.

"There isn't any more danger?" he inquired, in a low voice. "He ain't agoing to do that again? I—it scared me."

Faring shook his head without looking up. He had his watch out and was counting little Johnnie's feeble pulse.

"Safe enough for the present," he said, "but I tell you again the chances are against his living until daylight. He's very, very low."

"You're sure of that?" said the man Kansas from the centre of the room. His back was turned.

"Sure?" said Faring. "Sure? No; I'm sure of nothing. I'm no doctor-man. But I've seen people die of this, and I think Buchanan's going fast." He snapped the watch and rose to his feet with a sigh. "Eh, poor Buchanan!" he said. "What an end! I've small reason to love him. He was a cad and a coward and several other unpleasant things. He shut himself out from any human sympathy when he did what he did, but I'm sorry for him. Lord! what an end!"

He moved forward a step, and then stopped short, for the man with the blue eyes had turned and was facing him with his own pistol, which he had dropped at poor Buchanan's seizure. He gave a little, amused laugh.

"Ah!" he said. "We change places!"

"Yes," said the man with the blue eyes, stolidly. "Yes, we does. We do." He backed away towards the wall, leaving the centre of the room free. "I'll just trouble you," he said, "to sit down again in that chair where you was sitting before. I feel like you'd be more comfortable there while we talk it over. You

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said you'd came to talk it all over, pleasant-like. Maybe we might just pass a bit of line about you *and* the chair to make you more comfortable yet."

Faring watched the man in silence for a moment, and he appeared to be considering. Unquestionably the man with the blue eyes held the advantage in the situation. Unquestionably, also, he would not hesitate to shoot and to kill if pressed to it. Faring went to the broken chair and sat down. He did not look frightened. He had the air of awaiting the next move in an interesting game.

The other man came from his corner with a bit of rope—the sort of rope which is commonly used for clothes-lines and such. Holding this in one hand and the pistol in the other, he took two turns round Faring's body and arms, binding them fast to the chair-back. He knotted the rope and went back to his old place by the hearth.

"And now," he said, "we *will* talk it over, me and you and Johnnie—me and the two husbands! Ho, ho! Johnnie he can't talk, but I know what he'd say. I'll say it for him. I'll say Johnnie's part and mine, Mister husband number two!"

There was an odd, cold ferocity in his tone, a slow-burning fury which made Faring stare, for it was the first time he had heard the expression of any feeling at all in the man's voice save that one moment of agony over his stricken comrade.

"Johnnie's agoing to die before morning, eh?" said the man by the fireside. "And then I sha'n't have nothing to hold over you. My game's up, eh? I'm done for?"

"Yes," said Faring, with a nod. "I expect you're done for. What then?"

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"Then," said the man with the pistol—"then, by God, Johnnie don't go alone! Johnnie's agoing to have company, he is. No going out into the dark alone with nobody to talk to! The two husbands is agoing together. Done for, am I? Right, Mister husband number two! Right, says I. You're done for, too. And the lady with more husbands than is needful, she'll have to get on without none at all. We'll give her something to mope for and weep for and worry about. Ay, that we will! Mr. Gentleman John Buchanan and Mr. Harry Faring, Esquire, a-walking out into Kingdom-Come together! Ho, ho! A fine lark that 'll be, eh? A fine lark!"

Mr. Faring indulged in a gentle little laugh. "I take it," said he, "that it is your intention to murder me for the sake of giving poor Buchanan my society on his outward path. That would have amused Buchanan a few years ago. He's beyond seeing a joke now, but when he was in form that would have amused him. He had a certain grim sense of humor. You mean to murder me?"

The man with the pistol glowered across the firelit room.

"Yes, Mister husband number two," he said, "that's just what I mean." A sudden flush of anger swept into his face. He took a step forward towards the chair and the man who sat there smiling. "You knocked me down," he said, with that same still fury in his tone. "You took me by the throat and shook me about and beat me, didn't you, eh? Do you know what I'm agoing to do to you to pay you out, Mister too-many-husbands? I'm going to sit and wait till Johnnie's near his end—that 'll be towards morning—they usually goes before dawn—and every half-

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hour I'm agoing to nip off a little bit of you—an ear or a nose or something-like—with this here gun, just to pass the time away. I'm a good shot with a gun. When Johnnie goes, then what's left of you goes too. A fine little game, Mr. Gentleman-that-knocks-people-down-and-beats-'em-with-his-fists! A fine little game, eh, what?"

"Very fine, indeed," said the man in the chair, nodding. "That also would have amused Buchanan, I think."

The other looked up, frowning. "You don't seem like you cared very much yourself," he said.

And Faring laughed again. "Oh, I'm by way of being a philosopher," said he. "I take things as they come. A bit of philosophy saves you no end of bother at times."

The word seemed to strike at some disused and forgotten chord of memory in the other man. His face altered and he rubbed his free left hand across his eyes.

"I used to know a bit about philosophy," he said, very slowly. And it seemed to Faring that even his voice was different.

"Heaps of things I used to know about," he said, with slow difficulty. "Heaps. Only I—I forget. It's a long time." He spoke a name, an astonishing name, called up out of what strange past by the word "philosophy." "Lotze," he said. And after a moment: "Scho-pen-penhauer. Ay, he's the man. *He* knew. More than all the rest of 'em, he knew. Why, Steavens, he said—Steavens—" The man's wandering, dilated eyes caught upon Harry Faring bent forward in his chair, listening, eager, and he pulled himself up.

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"That's neither here nor there," he said, frowning again. "What was I a-saying?"

"We were speaking of Schopenhauer," said Faring.

"What Schopenhauer?" he asked. "We was a-talkin' about what I'm going to do to you."

Faring sank back in his bonds with a little sigh.

"It doesn't matter," said he. "I thought for a moment that you were going to be interesting. It was rather odd. Oh, by-the-way, since I am to die before morning, and am therefore not likely to repeat anything that I am told, would you mind setting me at rest about two or three matters? I'm frankly curious to know where it was that I saw you first. It wasn't in Cape Town. If you hadn't that beard I think I should remember at once."

The other man gave a little, mirthless laugh.

"No," he said, "it weren't in Cape Town. I'll tell you that much." After a moment he laughed again. "I was meaning to shave it off, anyhow," he said. "There's too many people about here has seen me with it. It'd spoil my getting away. We'll have a little barber-shop party. Ho, ho! A little, quick-change turn like they does in the music-halls."

He went to the farther corner of the room, and returned with a basin of water and a bit of soap. He went again, and brought a small, oblong hand-glass, broken at one corner, and a razor. With these implements, slowly, by dint of much hacking and pulling, much bad language and not a few cuts, he worried the scrubby brush of black beard from cheek and jaw and throat. When at last he turned his shaven face, Faring gave a quick exclamation.

"Oh yes," he said, readily, "I know now. It was the beard that deceived me, covering that scar. I

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saw you lurking about in the shrubbery near the outer gates at Buchanan Lodge on the evening of the night Buchanan disappeared. I warned Buchanan about you, and he said you had been there once before." Faring's eyes brightened suddenly. "Wait! Wait!" he said. "The plot begins to deepen, I think. What had you to do with Buchanan's disappearance? I sha'n't live to tell anybody else, you know. What had you to do with it?"

"I went with him," said the man with the scarred face.

IX

LITTLE JOHNNIE GOES—BUT NOT ALONE

AGAIN Mr. Faring leaned forward in his bonds with a little exclamation. "Good! Good!" said he. "We get on. Would you care to tell me about it?"

The man with the scarred face looked at him silently for some little time. At last he laughed.

"It's a very queer tale," he said. "If I was to hear it from somebody else I'd say he was a liar. Yes, I'll tell you, Mister husband number two! I'll tell you all about it—a fine, long tale. Then you and Johnnie can talk it over as you goes away together. Ay, a queer, fine tale!"

So then he set in to tell all he knew about poor Herbert Buchanan's disgust with life, and his going away in the night to escape the chains that bound him. He told how he himself had broken open a window of that great chamber where the old gods sat, and had come upon the man glooming there over his woes. He told of their strange conversation and of Buchanan's offer to him, and of the man's bitter, savage whim to disappear, with no word or trace left behind. He told of their going out of the window and down across the lawns, over the high wall and thence across fields and the sea-girt moor.

"And so we come to the old stone quarry yonder," he said, "the one that you can see from the door of

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this here hut. It was coming on to rain then, and there wasn't much light, just a quick bit of moon now and again when the clouds opened a bit. Ay, it was a nasty night—a rotten bad night! Maybe if it had been dry and bright there wouldn't ha' been any trouble. You see the path thereabouts runs very close to the edge of the quarry, and it was slippery, the path was. Well, he fell over the edge."

"Ah!" said Faring. "Quite of his own accord?"

"He fell over the edge," said the other man, stolidly. "One minute he was there in front of me—"

"Yes, quite so," said Faring, with a nod. "In front of you, to be sure."

"There in front of me," said the man with the scarred face, "and the next minute there wasn't nothing there at all." He paused a moment and scowled, looking away, as if the scene he brought up were distasteful to him. "It's a nasty place," he said, at length. "That damn dark quarry is a nasty place o' nights. It's so deep and black-like, with water in the bottom of the holes, and things a-growing there. There might be anything down in those deep places. They're creepy. It's a rotten, nasty place." He scowled again and stirred uneasily. "I expect it was a matter of two hours," he said, slowly, "before I screwed up enough nerve to go down. And even then I come back several times on the run before I got to the bottom and found him. He was lying half in a pool of water, and moaning and crying out most pitiful. I expect the water had brought him to his senses, because he was hurt very bad. His head was hurt—he had fell on that—and one leg was torn, and—and he was hurt in the back, too. The money was there all right, in his pocket."

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"Why didn't you take it and leave him?" asked Faring.

The other man flushed darkly, and he seemed to be laboring in honest embarrassment. He looked up with an odd little deprecatory glance, almost like Johnnie's own.

"I don't know," he said. "It was foolish, but I—he kept a-moaning and crying out so pitiful-like. There was a sort of cave near by, a sort of cross-gallery where the stone had been cut out sideways, very deep. It was warm and comfortable in there, and there was weeds and little trees a-growing in front of it, so that even if you was down in the quarry you might miss the place. Well, I carried him in there—he wasn't never a heavy-weight—and made him as comfortable as I could, and we lived there for close on six weeks. I'd left a bundle of things here in this very hut, and I fetched that. And then I used to go out 'nights and forage. I let my beard grow, too. It grows fast, and in a week or ten days I could go about quite safe in the daylight and buy things in the nearest village. In six weeks Johnnie was able to get about, and then one night we left and went West to a place near Chicago. There was a gang of hoboes living just outside of a little town there, and we lived with them."

"Then, at last," said Faring, "it occurred to you that you might be able to blackmail Buchanan's friends."

The other man nodded. "Yes," he said, "it was like that. I spent near six months a-trying to teach Johnnie to remember that he was Mr. Buchanan, but it wasn't no use. His head was hurt too bad. He remembered little bits, but he thought he made 'em

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up out of his head. He couldn't ever believe they was true. Then when we got here, Johnnie stumbled on the lady, quite accidental, while I wasn't with him, and I makes up my mind there was money to be had out of her because she was married again, and wouldn't want Johnnie a-turning up and spoiling things."

Faring nodded an approving head. "I should think," he said, "that you managed the thing as well as it could be managed. If it failed, that was through no fault of yours. It was Buchanan's illness that did for you."

The man with the scarred face nodded, and he turned his eyes upon the still figure of the little tramp who lay in the waning fire-light, sunk in his stupor of exhaustion, breathing in great, slow gasps, shrunken, wrecked, wasted incredibly, gray with the ashen pallor of that death which lurked waiting for him in the shadows of the room.

What bitter thoughts came to him and wrung his soul, what dark pictures marshalled themselves before his eyes and jibed at him no one ever knew; but Faring, bound in his broken chair, watching intently, saw the man's face twist in a grief beyond utterance, and he marvelled with something that was almost respect.

What had there been in that maddened little remnant of Herbert Buchanan to call forth such a love as this—and in such a man? Buchanan strong, in his prosperity, master of himself, had evoked love from nobody. There was a kind of sour irony in the thing. As Faring had said in reference to another grim jest, Buchanan himself would have appreciated it.

The man with the scarred face turned his eyes back again upon Harry Faring, and slowly there began to

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burn in them that old flame of sullen rage, of cold, despairing fury. When he spoke, after a little time, his voice was shaking.

"I think we'll begin now, Mister too-many-husbands," he said. "I think we'll just get you ready to go with Johnnie when Johnnie goes."

He took up the pistol from his knees, and, opening its breech, spun the cylinder under his thumb. Each of the five cartridges was in place—a grim little brazen circle of death. He snapped the breech to again and rose to his feet, stepping forward a pace away from the fire corner where he had been.

"We'll begin now," he said, and the hard eyes looked to Harry Faring with a very bitter hatred in their pallid gleam.

Faring took a deep breath. He stood in very grave peril now, and he knew it. If the man with the pistol should, with this first shot, wound him severely enough to cripple him, the game was played out and done, and nothing within the probabilities could turn his hand in it to success.

He had suffered himself to be bound in the chair because at the time there had seemed no help for it, but he had hoped and watched for some small chance of escape to offer itself. No chance had come, and now it appeared that the time for such chances was past.

That, however, is not to say that he gave up hope or meant tamely to sit still and be murdered without trying very hard to save his life, and something which was much more worth while than that. The chair under him was old and weak, and his feet were not bound to it. The rope had been passed twice round its rather flimsy back and round his body, pinioning

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his arms at the elbows. Given a minute's time, he was very sure that he could wrench and break his way free, though, of course, that was out of the question while he faced an able-bodied man with a loaded pistol.

When little Johnnie's friend rose and came forward, holding the weapon ready to fire, Faring watched him very alertly, and he stiffened his knees under him and planted his feet wider apart and more firmly on the floor. He meant to try to dodge the first shot, and then, before another could be fired, leap forward, bound as he was, and throw himself upon his assailant.

The scheme was not a wholly impracticable one. The distance between the two men was short, and Faring might quite possibly have succeeded, with an unexpected dash, in throwing the other man to the floor and then in wrenching himself free of the chair before the other had recovered. But, as it happened, the situation suddenly passed into other hands.

The man Kansas, raising his weapon to fire, saw Faring's eyes shift all at once from his and look past him, widening swiftly. Faring said, in a sharp whisper: "Look! Look, behind!"

It was no trick. It was honest. Kansas whirled on his feet, and, at what he saw, gave a great, sobbing cry.

Herbert Buchanan sat straight up on his couch, and one of his hands went out impotently beating the air.

"I didn't shoot you when—when I could have!" he said, staring wide-eyed into the shadows where the man Kansas had hidden himself.

The voice was the ghost of a voice, a rattle, a whistling gasp, but it was Buchanan's voice, not little Johnnie's. He coughed once. Then again a second time

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—a wet, horrible cough. Blood came from his lips, and, as he sat, that dreadful hand sawing at the air, he swayed back and forth as if he would fall.

At his master's first movement the Russian dog had turned quickly, and, crouching by the side of the couch, had thrust an eager, whining head upon the still limbs. The man Kansas gave a great cry and leaped forward.

"Johnnie!" he screamed. "Johnnie! Johnnie!" in a high voice like a woman's, and made as if he would throw himself upon that swaying body.

But as he leaped, the Russian dog, its hair bristling, its teeth bared, turned upon him with a roar. Somehow the man got his balance and sprang back, shouting out:

"Down, you beast! Down! Get out!"

The dog was fairly at his throat—it must have thought that in that forward lunge of his he was trying to strike the man on the couch—and he whipped up the pistol and fired twice. The first bullet missed, the second tore across the animal's shoulder without in the least checking its impetus. Then man and dog went down together. For a moment or two there was a very horrible and sickening sound of snarls and cries, of groans, and a pounding, thumping noise. Then no more.

X

THE LAST WORD

FOLLOWED in the little hut a space of silence. The fire burned low on the hearth, but its light still filled the centre of the room with a red, pulsing radiance and threw monstrous shadows over the uneven floor from the trestle which stood there and from that which lay still upon the trestle—still as death. Indeed, everything in the place was still as death: the fire burned without sound, little Johnnie on his rude couch was silent, and there was silence in those gloomy shadows at one side of the hearth. Even the motionless figure huddled grotesquely in the middle of the floor was still; for Faring, in that swift instant when the Borzoi leaped at its enemy's throat, had, not pausing to take thought, sprang up also, perhaps with some vague idea of checking the beast, the chair had tripped his cramped legs, and he had pitched forward upon his face, rolled half over, and then lain still. There was something awful in the swiftness with which silence had smitten the place. It was like the passing of the sudden wind of death.

But after a long time the avenger, the great Russian dog—such quaint and grotesque agents does Fate sometimes use to gain her hidden ends—crept out from those gloomy shadows beyond the hearth. It moved slinking, furtive-eyed, belly to the ground like

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a wolf, and red, wolfish lights glanced in its eyes such as never before had dwelt there. A blacker red stained its muzzle and hung clotted upon its hairy jowl.

It went to the man who lay upon the floor, bound still to the broken chair, and, crouching, sniffed at his white face. Faring did not stir, and the dog gave an anxious, uneasy whine and set to licking its master's cheeks. After a little, Faring came dimly to his senses. Once, in Africa, some years before this time, his little exploring column had been attacked by a native force and had lost several men. Faring himself had fought for hours stretched on the ground behind a bulwark composed of two dead porters who had been almost hacked to pieces. In this moment of awakening he thought that he was back in that day, stretched, rifle at shoulder, behind the two dead porters. It was a peculiar, acrid, never-to-be-forgotten scent in his nostrils which made the illusion.

In another moment he realized that the dog was whining beside him and licking his face. Then full recollection came to him, and he drove the beast away with sobbing curses. He struggled to his knees, that chair an incubus bound upon him. His head swam giddily and he was very weak, for his fall had been a heavy one.

The dog had drawn a little apart and crouched upon the floor, its head down, its tail wagging ingratiatingly. The man remembered, and his face twisted in a sudden spasm. For a moment he was swept by an acute nausea.

He knelt there a long time faint and ill, waiting for strength to come to him. At last he made a great effort, got to his feet, and so dropped back again into

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the chair as he had first sat. He was far from possessing the strength to free himself. At the movement the Russian dog rose again and came forward fawning at its master's feet. Again Faring drove the beast away with heel and voice. He saw its blackened, horribly stained jowl, and another wave of nausea swept him. In his weakness he felt that he must scream like a woman if the creature should touch him.

Thereafter, because the pain in his head was very great, he dropped into a half swoon and hung still in his bonds, his head on his breast. The dog came unrebuked to his knees and looked up whining. It licked his hand, but he did not stir. Then it began a restless, uneasy tour of the little room. Once it sniffed at that low trestle whereon little Johnnie lay so quiet and silent, but backed away again growling. Once it looked into those gloomy shadows beyond, and licked its chops, as it were reminiscently. It seemed that it could not be still. At last it went to the door and whined. The lock was long since rusted into disuse, and the door remained closed only by its weight. The dog pushed at it with its nose and tugged with a forepaw at the edge. At last it got it open. Once more it came back to where Faring sat drooping in his chair, and licked his hand. Still he did not stir. The dog turned away with a little whine and slipped out of the door into the darkness. There in the dripping night it set its head towards home, a mile across the hills, and it ran as if it were in dire terror.

Followed in the little hut another space of silence wherein nothing stirred or spoke and the fire burned lower. Faring came, after a long time, once more to

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his senses, very slowly, through a borderland of strange dreams and disordered fancies. He opened his eyes and the fire waned before him; little Johnnie on his pallet lay straight and motionless. He must be better (or worse), Faring thought, for there was no more stertorous breathing. The dog was nowhere in sight. He whistled faintly to it and at last called out, but it did not come. Then he felt a draught of cool air at the back of his head, and knew that the animal must somehow have got the door open and fled away.

He tried the strength of his arms, straining at the rope which bound them, but they were too weak, and he sat still again, waiting. He saw that the fire had sunk to red embers so that the circle of light was slowly closing in upon the hearth. It was already much dimmer, and he stared at it with a sort of child-like terror. Horror unspeakable dwelt in those black shadows beyond, and he dreaded being left in the dark with it.

It was odd—but withal natural enough—that the wider significance of the tragedy, the freedom and safety it guaranteed, had not yet penetrated to his dazed brain. That stunned head of his dwelt still among grisly horrors and saw nothing beyond.

He stared at the reddening, dying fire, and it seemed to him that interminable hours dragged by. Possibly, after the final return of consciousness, a scant half-hour passed. Then he heard a voice from the night without. He stiffened in his chair and his mind leaped to action as a roused soldier leaps to battle.

Who could be abroad upon the moor on such a night? He thought of the open door behind him and the bar of light it must be casting forth upon the

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darkness. He had been a fool not to have struggled somehow across the room and closed it. He tasted the swift bitterness of imminent peril—the peril of discovery at last, and after all his pains, all Betty's struggles to keep the thing secret. He even began a desperate planning—as desperate as the woman's had been in her darkest hour—of what he should say and do, what explanation he should make, when those who were coming through the night had entered that place of death and horror.

Then the voice without spoke close to the open door, and Faring dropped weakly back in his bonds with a breath that was almost a sob. The voice said:

“Na, na. Ye maunna gang in. Bide ye heer a wee till I hae keekit!”

It was old McNaughton, the gardener. He came into the room tiptoeing, and Faring heard his tongue clack in his mouth as he saw that still place where death was. Faring turned his head, and the man gave a sudden gasp, then came quickly to him.

“Cut these ropes,” said Faring. “Be quick. Cut me free. Who is with you out there? Whom were you speaking to? Betty! Betty!”

The woman ran to him with a soft rush of draperies and dropped on her knees beside the chair. She caught him by the shoulders, staring whitely into his face.

“You're not hurt, Harry?” she cried. “There's nothing the matter? You're not hurt?”

The old Scotsman had got out his clasp-knife and with it hacked his master's bonds in two. Faring's released arms dropped stiffly beside him, and he moved them back and forth, bending the elbows. His eyes did not stir from his wife's eyes.



"THE WOMAN . . . DROPPED ON HER KNEES BESIDE THE CHAIR"

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"I'm all right," he said. "I had a nasty fall and it stunned me. I'm all right."

For some obscure reason they both spoke in whispers.

"The dog came," she said. "It came scratching and whining at McNaughton's hut and waked him. Its muzzle and chaps" — she hid her face — "they were stained. McNaughton came under my window. There was a light, because I wasn't asleep. I haven't slept since you went away. He called and threw gravel, and I heard him. Then we came, McNaughton and I. He knows, Harry. He knows all about everything. We came away without being seen or heard. The dog led us. It wouldn't come in here. It's waiting out in the dark now. I think it is a bit mad. Harry, Harry! I was frightened so! I didn't know what might have happened. These last days have been— I know what damned people suffer, Harry. I know now. And that dog's dreadful stained mouth. What is it? What has he done? What has happened?"

Faring put her gently away from him and rose to his feet. He swayed for a moment, dizzily. Béatrix rose also, watching him.

"Go to the door, Betty," he said, "and wait for us there. Do not look." He turned her towards the door, but she would not go.

"No, Harry, no!" said she. "I must stay. Don't try to spare me anything. Whatever it is that has been done to-night has come of me and of what I did. Don't try to spare me."

Faring motioned to the old Scots gardener, who had a lantern slung on his arm, and they crossed the room to the hearth.

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"Here first," said he, and, taking the lantern, held it down into those gloomy shadows where the man Kansas had fallen. The Scotsman bent beside him, but at the sight of the huddled thing there straightened himself suddenly with a gasping cry in strange words. The words were not English, nor McNaughton's version of that tongue, so they must have been Gaelic. He said them over again in a shaking, whispering voice.

"It was the dog," Faring explained, briefly. "I was bound in the chair yonder and could not prevent it."

They turned to the low trestle before the fire where little Johnnie lay so straight and still. Béatrix stood there, and, as Faring turned, lifted her face to him. The face was very white and the eyes burned from it strangely.

"Dead!" her lips said, without sound. "He is dead."

Faring nodded. "I thought so," said he. "He was dying some hours ago." He looked down very gravely and compassionately upon the wreck which living had been Herbert Buchanan, and the dead man's wizened face stared back at him blankly, with dull, opaque eyes, the lips drawn into a sort of wry, sour grin. A profound pity stirred in him for this poor creature who had lived unloving and unloved and had died so sordidly. He thought of the havoc which had everywhere followed the man's life and had touched every one who had had anything to do with it. It seemed as if something evil and poisonous must have breathed from him, some malignant curse. Faring found himself wondering if the curse was dead with

THE LAST WORD

the man who bore it. Surely it must be so, he said to himself. Enough suffering had been borne while Buchanan lived. Surely he could leave no heritage of ill behind him.

But there was one last, poignant note in the night's miserable tragedy which had up to this moment escaped his knowledge. Something about the still figure which lay stretched on its pallet caught his eye, and he bent forward with a sudden exclamation.

"Look! Look!" he cried out. "Look there!"

Across the dead man's neck a strange little groove had been torn, and below, on the sunken chest, where the shirt was partly pulled away, a bluish round spot lay plain to view. Grimly enough, the only man in the world who loved Buchanan had slain him. Those two bullets fired desperately at the leaping hound had gone beyond and found their prey. Buchanan had not died of his malady. His friend had killed him.

Béatrix began a dry, overwrought sobbing. Faring slipped an arm about her shoulders and led her towards the door. But near it he turned back for a moment.

"Only we three," he said, looking at the old Scotsman—"only we three living souls know the truth of this matter. Buchanan is dead, and the other who knew is dead also. We three remain. The secret is safe with us, I think." He spoke with a shade of question in his tone.

The old man looked at him without expression.

"I dinna ken just what yir meanin' maybe, sir-r," he said, stolidly. "It may be the leddy has tell't me summat, but I hae nae recollection. Whiles, I hae nae memory at a'."

BUCHANAN'S WIFE

Faring gave a brief smile.

"Thank you, McNaughton," said he. "The secret is safe, I see. I need not have spoken. I must take Mrs. Faring home now. Then I shall come back and we will consider about what is to be done here. Would you be willing to wait for me?"

"Ay," said the old man. "I'll bide. Dinna fash yersel'."

Faring and Béatrix went out and began their walk across the moor and up the slow hill-slope which led towards home.

The night had passed and the first faint light of dawn was abroad. It smelled of the coming day. The turf was damp from the rain, but the clouds had driven over before a fresh west wind and the sky was clear again.

"And so, Betty," said the man, "we're safe at last—free. The two who threatened us are dead. McNaughton has forgotten. There's nobody now who knows."

She raised her face to him and kissed him. Then for a little she walked on in silence.

"*We* know, Harry," she said, at last. "*We* know. We shall always know and never forget."

Faring shook his head. He stopped in his walk and took her in his arms, turning her about so that he looked into her eyes.

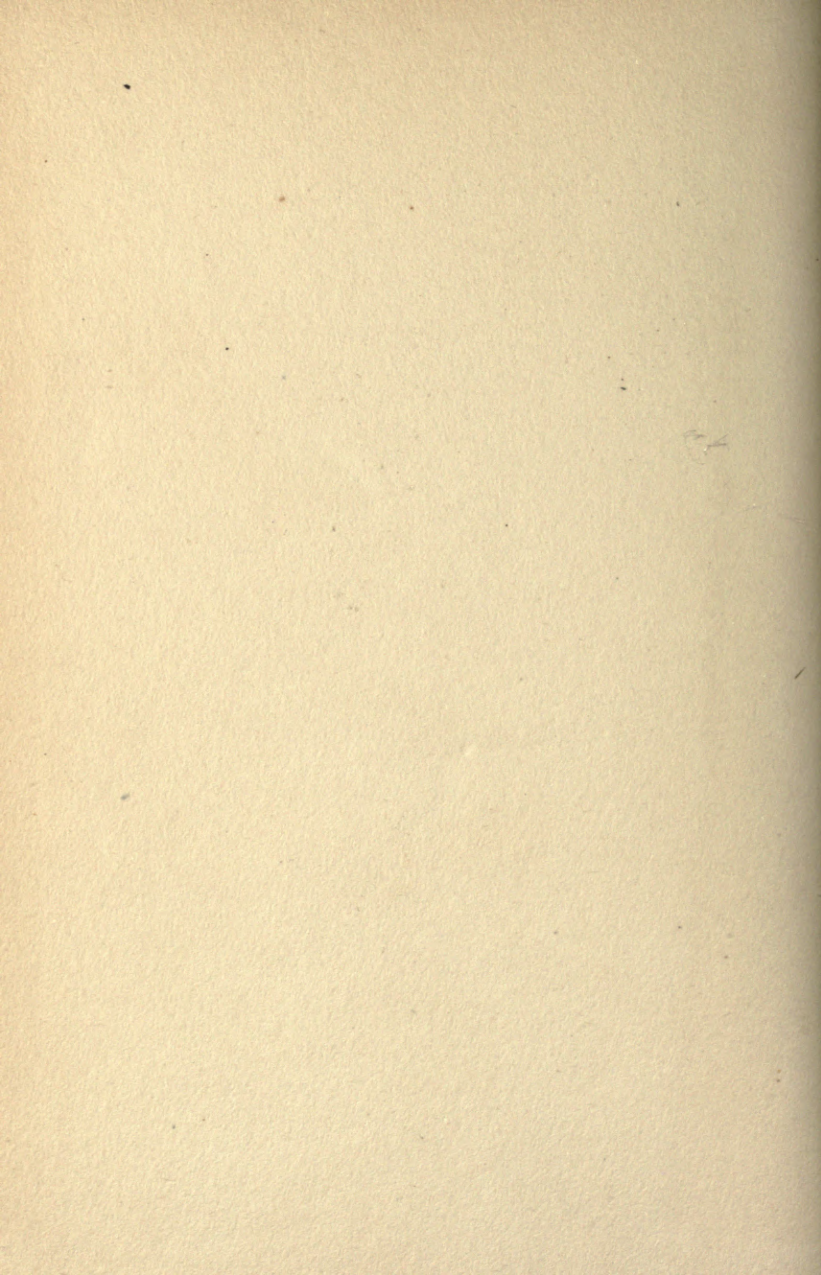
"Oh, my dear," he said, "we are young, and life is long, and the world is a very beautiful place—almost as beautiful as you are. *We shall* forget. Look at the sky, Betty. The night's going out of it and the day is coming. 'Joy cometh of a morning.' It says so somewhere, and I know it is true. I tell you we *shall* forget!"

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She crept closer into his arms, looking up to him with pleading eyes.

"Do you think we shall, Harry?" she begged. "Oh, I want to—I want to. Do you think we shall?"

THE END



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